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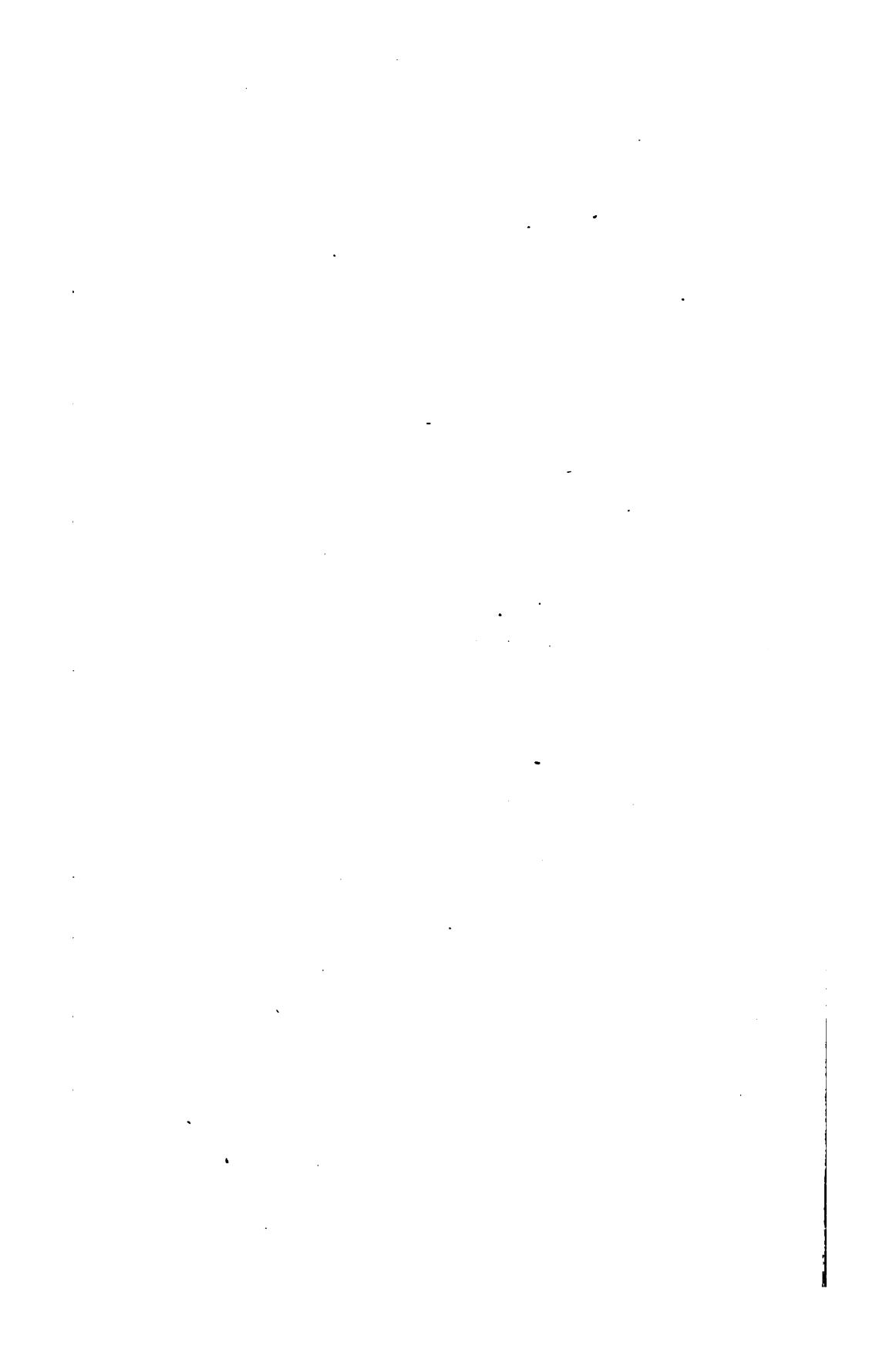
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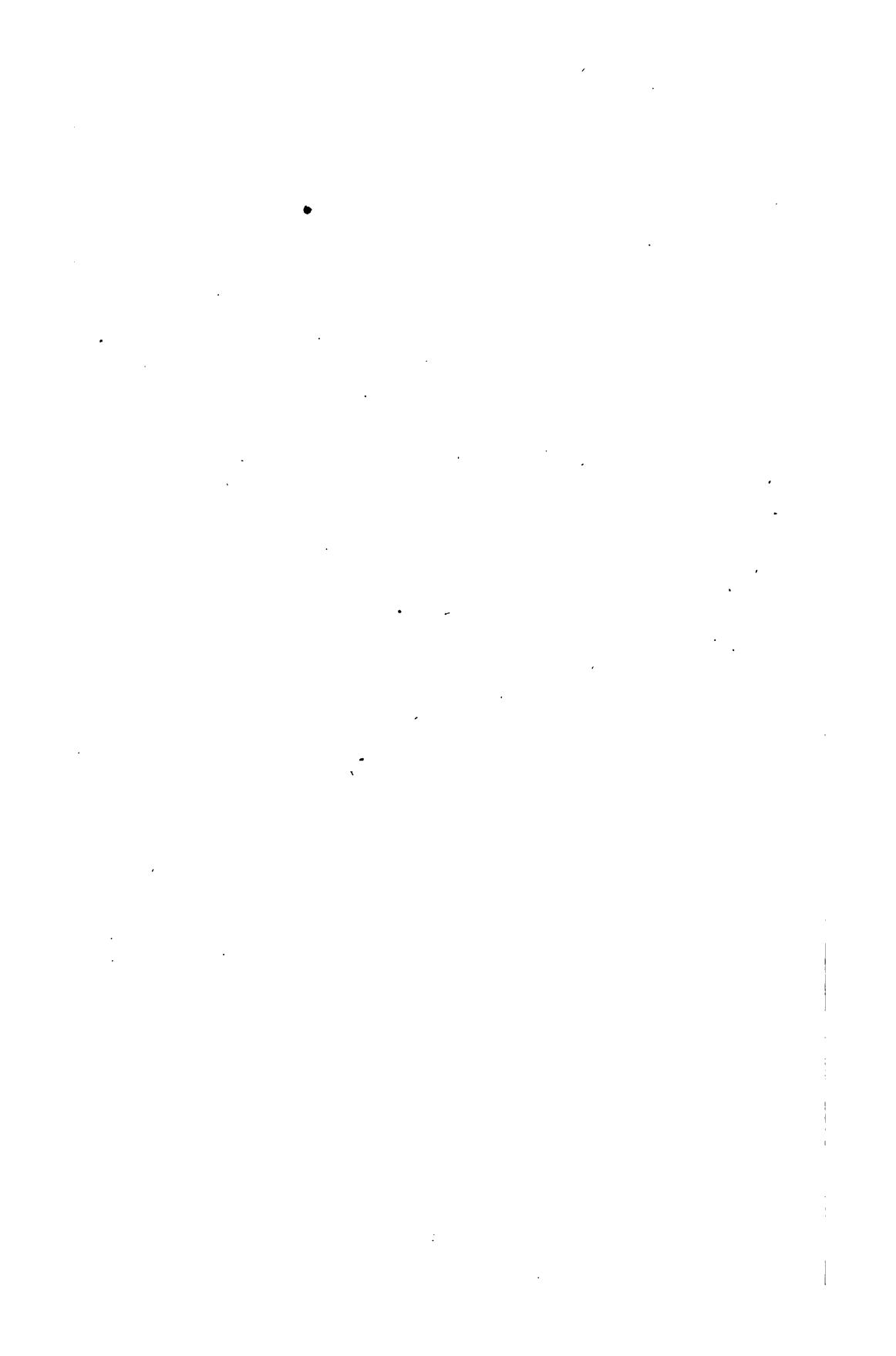
OXFORD











THE PRESENT
POVERTY OF IRELAND

CONVERTIBLE INTO THE
MEANS OF HER IMPROVEMENT,

UNDER A WELL-ADMINISTERED

POOR LAW.

WITH A PRELIMINARY VIEW OF THE
STATE OF AGRICULTURE IN IRELAND.

BY LORD CLEMENTS, M.P.

"There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
Would men observingly distil it out."

K. HENRY V. Act iv. Sc. 1.

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P R E F A C E.

SOME explanation is required, if not some apology, for venturing to place these few pages before the public in their present shape.

I was much surprised to find in the evidence taken before the Agricultural Committee in 1836, the large amount of misapprehension which seemed to exist in England on the state of Irish Agriculture ; and I shortly after threw together some remarks on the subject, with an intention of publishing them, though I afterwards abandoned that idea.

But, whenever I have attempted latterly to discuss the Irish Poor Law Bill, either in private or in public, these same misapprehensions about the real state of Irish Agriculture (which forms the principal employment of the people) have always seemed to fall in my way ; and having lately had occasion to explain my opinions upon the subject, and having, as the shortest method of doing so,

submitted the first part of this paper to those whose judgment on such points cannot be too highly valued, I was so strongly urged to continue it, and to make known my views on the Poor Laws, that I consented to do so.

I have only been able to devote a few days to the latter branch of the subject,— and although the unfortunate condition of our poor in Ireland has occupied much of my time and thoughts for some years, I am sensible that it would require more accurate knowledge, stronger powers of reasoning, and more talents for writing also, than I can claim, to treat such a subject, in so short a time, in a manner to be really worthy of the attention of the public.

The following pages, therefore, are made public solely in the hope of exciting useful, practical discussion among those whose ability to do justice to the question is far greater than mine.

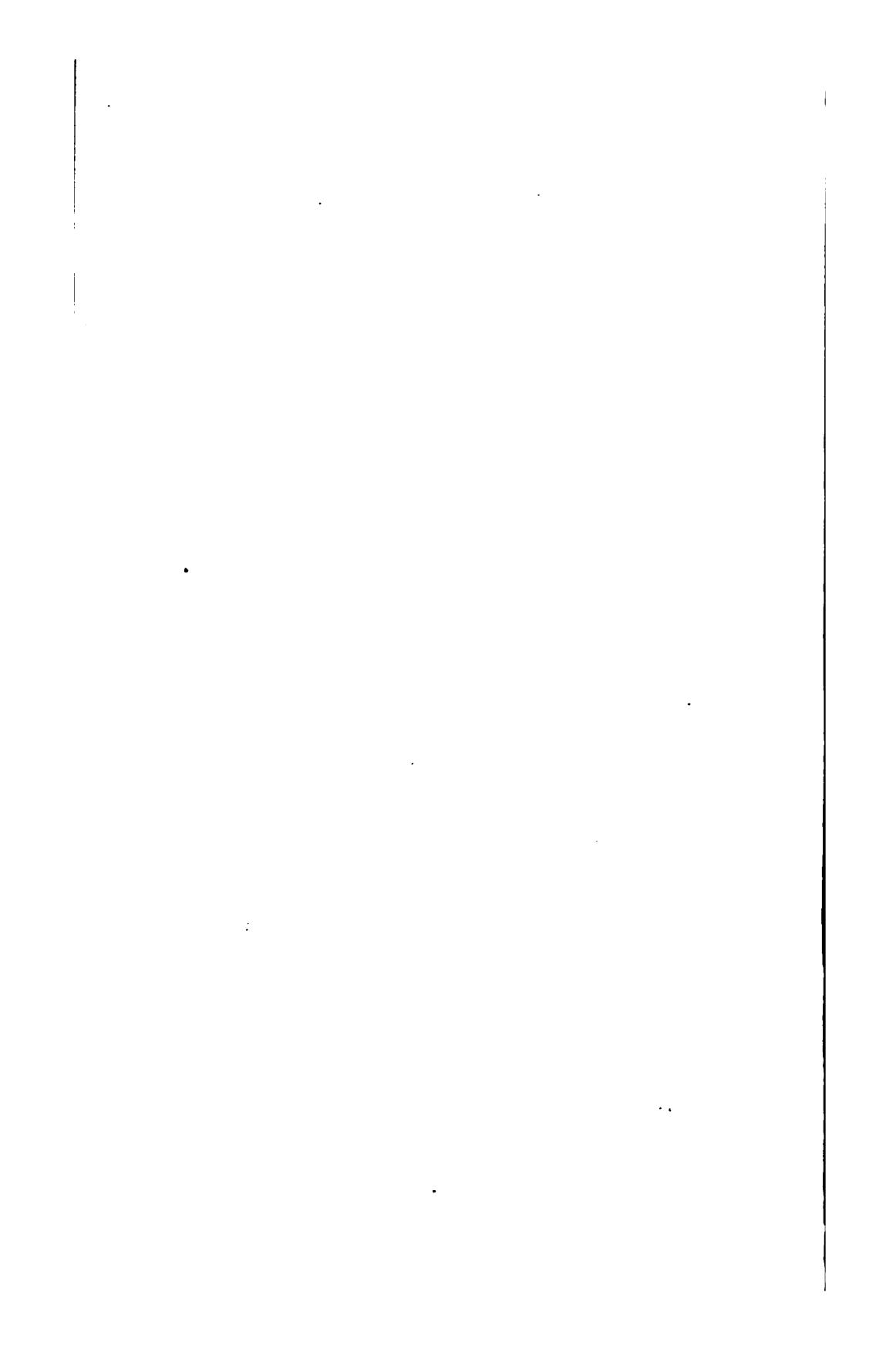
I am aware also, that the division of the subject under two completely separate heads may be inconvenient to the reader ; but I have not had time to alter the original and accidental arrangement, as the object proposed by this publication would be defeated by delay.

When I reflect how many persons there are, eminent for their powers of reasoning, who are adverse to the principle of the Poor Law which has been

proposed for Ireland,—and how many others, eminent for their attachment to her interests, who despair of making it work practically, I am conscious that I ought to feel the greatest distrust in the sanguine hopes which I have ventured to form of its ultimate success.

The general object of these pages is to show, that very small profits have hitherto been derived from the existing system of tillage in Ireland, which seems to have been pursued only for a mere subsistence ; to explain that capital has been invested in cattle rather than in labour, and the evil consequences of this practice ; and, lastly, to indicate, if possible, the means by which the pressure of a Poor Rate, (if that pressure should be applied, as it ought to be, precisely on the principle of the English law,) may be made to introduce a more wholesome state of things.

Jan. 9, 1838.



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STATE OF AGRICULTURE IN IRELAND.

§ I. *Introduction.—Popular Errors as to the Effect of the Import of Irish Grain on English Prices; as to the Fertility of the Soil, and the Profits derivable by the Farmer, from Low Wages.*

AT a moment when so much increased interest is expressed in the state of Ireland; when the influence which she exercises on the councils and on the economical condition of the people of Great Britain is the theme of daily argument; and when the export of her produce is supposed to have such an exaggerated effect on the price of grain in the English markets,—it may perhaps be interesting to inquire what is in reality the present condition of Agriculture in Ireland, what are the causes that have contributed to its comparative inferiority, and what will be the most probable and practical sources of its improvement. The anomalies which are said to exist there are numerous; but when we hear her constantly described as an “Agricultural country,” — when we know that an unusually large

proportion of her population subsists wholly by agriculture,—and when we find nevertheless that tillage has hitherto obtained less consideration in Ireland, than in any other portion of the kingdom,—we must surely admit that this indifference forms one of the most striking anomalies which can be noticed. The day is probably not far distant when it will be removed.

There is a vague impression in the minds of some people that the agriculture of Ireland must have been vastly improved already; for they suppose that the increase in her exports must be mainly attributed to that cause. There is a general idea also that any further improvements in tillage will tend to augment the export considerably, to reduce the price of grain in England, and injure the interests of the British farmers; there is consequently much jealousy shown by the latter upon that score. It is desirable therefore, by a sketch of the state of farming as it exists in Ireland, to show that the actual increase of exports is to be attributed to the increasing *quantity* of tillage, rather than to much improvement in the method of cultivation; and that the increase in the quantity of land tilled, has been produced, not so much by the temptation to more extensive culture, which an increase of profits attendant upon tillage have held out; as by the increased necessity for the conversion of more grass-land into potato-ground,—a course which unavoidably *prepares it for corn*.

Moreover, it will appear on examination, that the progressive advance which has taken place in the amount of exports from Ireland, not having flowed from an improvement in the system of tillage in that country, has not been attended with any corresponding amelioration of the fortunes or condition of the owners or occupiers of the soil. It seems not unreasonable to deduce from this state of existing circumstances, that if the present miserable system of culture could be generally exchanged for that improved method of cultivation of which scattered examples are to be discovered in many parts of Ireland,* a change of results must follow a change of causes: — and instead of unprofitable tillage, entailing poverty on the bulk of the population, and therefore a limited home consumption of grain, and considerable export; we might witness the happy alternative of profitable husbandry enriching the agriculturist, and diminishing the exports of grain by giving that stimulus to home consumption, which would follow an improvement in the means and habits of the people.

* It would be very wrong to undervalue the improvements in husbandry which *have* been introduced; it is only contended here, that they have not been sufficient *of themselves* to supply the increasing demand for home consumption within the country itself — which is too often kept out of sight. Where *improved* tillage has been introduced, a profit may have been derived by the farmer, the landlord, or both: where a greater quantity of bad tillage only has been remarked, the profits of neither party have been increased, although it has tended to swell the exports.

proportion of her population subsists wholly agriculture,—and when we find nevertheless tillage has hitherto obtained less consideration in Ireland, than in any other portion of the kingdom,—we must surely admit that this indeed forms one of the most striking anomalies which can be noticed. The day is probably not distant when it will be removed.

There is a vague impression in the minds of some people that the agriculture of Ireland has been vastly improved already; and they suppose that the increase in her exports of grain may be attributed to that cause. There is also the opinion that any further improvement in agriculture tends to augment the export commerce by increasing the price of grain in England, and thus by increasing the profits of the British farmers; though there is much jealousy shown by the English agriculturists of the progress made in Ireland. It is desirable therefore, both for the interest of farming as it exists in Ireland, and for the actual increase of exports, that there should be a continued increase in the quantity of grain produced, notwithstanding the much improvement in the methods of cultivation. And that the increase in the quantity of grain produced has been produced, notwithstanding the fact that more extensive cultivation and greater profits attend the increased cultivation of grass-land, is a circumstance which it is difficult to avoid.

to show the extent of error which exists on this subject, and the many fallacies which have been encouraged by ignorance, by jealousy, or sometimes, as it would seem, for other extraneous purposes: for, supposing that Irish grain *was* raised at a comparatively larger profit, it may be shown that the quantity exported, after all, is insufficient to cause the depression which is complained of by the English farmer; and, still further, it appears that the low price of wheat which occurred lately did actually cause the same distress to the tillage farmer in the one country as in the other, and that the diminished price compelled the Irish to diminish the growth and export of that particular description of grain, even *before* their brethren in England had reduced their supply.

First, then, if we turn to the Report of the Agricultural Committee which sat in 1836,* we find that the average annual consumption of foreign wheat in England, in the years 1829—30, and —31, was 1,519,245 quarters per annum, and yet the absence of almost the *whole* of that importation in 1835, during which the ports were nearly closed to foreign wheat, did not prevent the price of wheat falling 27s. per quarter.

The following are the quantities of foreign and Irish wheat imported into England in the years 1831 and 1835 respectively:—

* Commons', 1836, App^s. 8.

	Foreign, Quarters	Irish, Quarters	Total, Quarters
1831	1,491,631	557,520	2,049,141
1835	28,413	661,776	690,189

The average price in 1831 was 66s. 4d. per qr. Whereas it had fallen in 1835 to 39s. 4d. per qr. notwithstanding the striking diminution of import which had occurred.

So that the increased home growth in 1835 not only filled up the deficiency, for which resort had been so largely made to foreign grain previous to 1831, but also supplied the vast increase of consumption which occurred with the falling price : and it is obvious, that the increase of Irish grain between 1831 and 1835 (only 104,256 quarters) must have had but a trifling share in satisfying this demand ; so that the increased home growth of Great Britain, on a comparison of the above years, must have been *at least* three times as great as the gross import from Ireland :—therefore, it can have exercised but an insignificant effect on the extraordinary fluctuations which we observe in the English market.

But, secondly, the comparative insignificance of the import from Ireland is still more strongly illustrated when we pursue the examination a little further, and find that for the three years preceding the last Agricultural Committee, while the price of wheat had fallen rapidly, the import from Ireland had sensibly diminished.

This is made apparent by extracting from the

Report of the last Agricultural Committee, the average price of wheat in England during these three years, as well as the annual amount of imports from Ireland.

Year.	Average Price. <i>s. d.</i>	Import from Ireland.		
		Wheat, Qrs.	Flour, Cwts.	Total, Qrs.
1833	52 11	541,742	1,059,588	844,201
1834	46 2	462,229	1,110,464	779,504
1835	39 4	340,585	1,124,844	661,776

Yet, strange to say, this fall in price (from 52*s.* to 39*s.*) was erroneously attributed by most of the farmer-witnesses in 1836, to the introduction of wheat from Ireland,—though this import had itself actually fallen with the price, from 800,000 quarters to 600,000 quarters.

The fact is, that the Irish tillage-farmers suffered, during the depression of prices, just as much as the English; and, being poor, they were obliged to apply the only remedy much more quickly than their richer neighbours, and, when they found the price falling, they diminished the growth of wheat. This is detailed at some length by Mr. Saunders, the great Liverpool corn-merchant,* and has not escaped the attention of the Irish Assistant Poor Inquiry Commissioners, who notice in all the *richer*

* House of Commons' Agricultural Committee, 1836. Question 6037.

districts, the quantity of land which had been lately thrown out of tillage, and the distress which this course had occasioned to the labouring classes.

In the article of oats, the very contrary state of things may be noticed: the price in England had annually risen for the same three years, though the import from Ireland had also increased.

Year.	Average Price. <i>s. d.</i>	Import from Ireland.		
		Oats, Qrs.	Oatmeal, Cwts.	Total, Qrs.
1833	18 5	1,353,533	642,693	1,762,519
1834	20 11	1,277,598	772,994	1,747,910
1835	22 0	1,462,580	566,007	1,822,766

But none of the witnesses examined before the committee in 1836 could find fault with the last quotation of the price of oats,—and even the most anti-Irish among them declared* that it was sufficiently remunerating,—though more had been introduced from Ireland in 1835 than before. So that it is clearly proved that the price of wheat fell in spite of the diminishing import from Ireland; and that the price of oats rose in spite of the increasing import from that country.

The apprehensions and jealousy of some of the farmers respecting the competition of Irish produce seem to be quite unbounded; and we find several members on the Agricultural Committee very ready

* Question 589.

to foster the delusions of the distressed farmers, who attribute their ruin to the increase of Irish wheat. Even those whose doctrines on the Corn Laws are generally admitted to be very sound, are seen occasionally falling into error on these points, and conveying their own opinions in the questions which they put, thereby suggesting * “complaints” that “the interests of the farmer must be affected by “wheat *poured in* from the improved cultivation of “Ireland.” Though every member of the committee had access to the documents inserted in their report, and quoted above, which are of so much greater value than the opinions of the farmers upon that head, and which show that the wheat “*poured in*” from Ireland had at that very time so sensibly diminished. Nevertheless, some well-informed members † seem to have adopted the idea very strongly, and directly imply in the form of their question, not only that the fall in the price of wheat in the Buck-

* Agricul. Com. Comms, 1836. Q. 1017, 1018. 3746.

† Question 237. “Supposing this land, which you say was “subject to 12*s.* in the pound poor-rate, and paid a commutation “for tithe, had to compete with land of equal quality, which “neither paid tithe nor poor-rate, *as, for instance, the land in “Ireland,* do you think that would be a fair and equal competition?”—Answer. “It could not compete with it at all.”

Question 238. “If you meet, in the Buckingham market, with “wheat from Ireland, raised on land of the same quality, but which “pays neither poor-rate nor tithe, you cannot be surprised at the fall “of the price of wheat?”—Answer. “No; the Irish produce comes “here not subject to those taxes, and of course they can under-“sell us in our own market, and have a profit themselves.”

10 EFFECT OF IMPORT OF IRISH GRAIN.

ingham market was occasioned by the competition of wheat from Ireland, but that the Irish must have been enabled to sustain that competition by the non-payment of poor-rate and *tithe* in Ireland! It must strike every unprejudiced person, that such high authority ought to have discouraged such exaggerated misconceptions: there are not wanting other occasions, when the leading members of the landed interest represent, that payments derived from the land *are but deductions from rent*, and do not influence the farmers in the growth of produce, or in the pursuits of industry. Be that as it may, however, it would seem that the witness quoted above (who is a fair specimen of the average error prevalent on the subject) has much overrated the effect which this competition produces on English prices: being asked shortly after—"Supposing the whole of the produce of "Ireland were driven from the English market, what "effect do you think that would have?" he answers—"It must give us a *fair* price for our produce; we "should have the supply of *our own country*." Q. "What do you call a fair price?"—A. "The "lowest price at which we can grow wheat is 56s. "a quarter. Now we have not above 40s." So he not only mistakes the *cause* of Irish export, but miscalculates its *effect* so much as to suppose that it lowers the price of wheat in England 16s. a quarter! There is no class of persons whom it is so easy to mislead upon questions of this sort as

the farmers, and it is very sad, and very cruel, that little feelings of international jealousy should be excited by misapprehensions.

Next, as to the error which prevails relative to the superior fertility of the soil, and the advantage of a low rate of wages in Ireland, it will appear that the merits of the soil are counterbalanced by the badness of the cultivation ; and that the minute subdivision of farms, and the inefficiency of farm servants, occasion such an increase in the quantity of labour required in Ireland, as is more than proportionate to the lowness of its price. The soil in Ireland, speaking generally, is a strong, good soil ; it has been subjected, like its inhabitants, to very hard usage, and has borne this wonderfully ; but its natural fertility has been constantly (we may almost say, *systematically*) counteracted by bad farming, and the average produce per acre is consequently below the average in Great Britain. At the same time, the population is so inferior in skill, that a much greater number of labourers is required to produce these inferior crops.

The late Mr. Curwen, M.P. in his Agricultural Tour through Ireland, says very justly,† “ The “golden vale which forms part of this county is no-“ where surpassed in richness of soil, yet are there “very many acres of indifferent land, well cultivated, “which produce more abundant crops. * * * Soil

† Vol. i. p. 371.

"of the first quality is brought down to the standard
"of very indifferent land in Great Britain." The Assistant Poor Inquiry Commissioners repeat pretty nearly the same observations, in twenty-nine out of thirty-one districts which they visited in 1835.

With respect to the cost of labour also, their details are usefully minute, and are sufficient to show that the Irish farmer pays, on an average, more money at low wages than the English farmer pays at high wages. Mr. Gisborne says, (App. F. King's Co. p. 378.)—
"The same quantity of labour is used per acre on
"land in this barony as *in the counties in the South of Ireland*. The accounts received from farmers require one man to every seven or eight statute acres in tillage. In Great Britain, on land of this nature, one man would work from fifteen to twenty acres. There appears to be very little difference in the number of horses kept on land in the two countries; but it is difficult to compare the horse-labour required, as these tillage-farms are comparatively so small in size, and, consequently, much more horse-power is likely to be wasted, and often to be unemployed. It is impossible to state what causes such a disparity in the number of men employed in the two countries, without a most intimate acquaintance with the whole working of farms in both islands: very little is done in this barony with "the spade."

Mr. Power calculates* that twenty men are em-

* P. 238, *et passim*.

ployed to every hundred acres of tillage in Leinster ; these are probably *Irish* acres, which would give twenty men to one hundred and sixty, or one man to eight statute acres.

Mr. Clarke finds, in Connaught,* that one man is actually employed to every seven statute acres in a very large parish : and though it is what may be called a tillage district, we must remember that there are at least three acres out of every seven un-tilled, on the average of Irish farms, according to the prevalent mode of husbandry ; consequently, we must count upon one man to every four acres of tillage in the minutely subdivided districts of Connaught and Ulster.

In many extreme cases, more labour is reported† to be employed.

In Great Britain, employment varies at the rate of one man to every twelve or twenty-five acres of tillage, the latter rate being the more usual ; so, if we suppose that one man is required for every six statute acres, on the average, in Ireland, at 8d. per day wages, and one man for every eighteen statute acres, on the average, in Great Britain, at 2s. per day wages, the sum required to pay for labour would be found to be exactly the same per 100 acres of tillage in both countries ;—but it is notorious that the average rate of wages for agricultural labourers in England is below 2s. per day. In some of the most highly improved agricultural districts in

* P. 368.

† P. 272, *et passim*.

England* we find that labourers receive only from 1*s.* 2*d.* to 1*s.* 6*d.* per day (average 1*s.* 4*d.*), who are described to be first-rate workmen ; and in the best and most highly cultivated farms† one man will work thirty acres, or even more ; so that it cannot be doubted that in the article of labour the English tillage-farmers have an advantage, and that for the same sum of money per acre expended in labour their land is better tilled, and more produce raised, than in Ireland ; for it is not in mere animal power alone that labour is paid for,—stones may be broken by the ton much cheaper in Ireland than in Great Britain,—but the nicer branches of labour, where some skill is required, and the general economy and division of labour is so much better practised here, that the comparison is unfavourable to the profit of farming in Ireland.

It may be argued, perhaps, that a great proportion of the Irish corn is grown by labourers on their own account, so that the price paid for labour cannot be calculated in a majority of cases : this is, in some respects, true ; but the only way in which we can estimate the value of the labour expended by *them*, is by making the comparison in the case of such farmers as *do* employ labourers and pay them.

It would be well worth while to pursue this subject a little further, as the most unanswerable evidence might be produced of the correctness of these

* Library of Useful Knowledge.—Report on Select Farms.
Netherby, p. 60.

† Ibid.

remarks. But, after all, when the condition of the labouring population is taken into account, and when it is considered that the greater part of their nominal money wages is paid in conacre ground and in house-room, it will be perceived at once that, although a much nearer approximation to truth might be attained than is generally current, no useful practical comparison can be instituted between the money wages paid in England for skilful, and the nominal wages given in Ireland for unskilful labour, which is paid in conacre, more or less manured for potatoes, and seldom or never in coin. And every practical farmer who has seen both countries will acknowledge, that the employer has an immense advantage in the article of wages in England, though he may not be able to estimate the exact amount thereof with precision.

§ II. *Sketch of the Progress of Agriculture.*

IT follows, from the above remarks, that the corn sent from Ireland does not exercise such an effect upon the markets of Great Britain as the English farmers suppose, and that the profit of raising it is by no means so great as they are led to believe: on the contrary, it is well known that tillage, which is commonly conducted upon erroneous principles in Ireland, is not found to be so profitable as grazing; and that persons possessed of capital do not vest it in

agriculture, or, at least, are only found engaged in what is elsewhere considered the inferior branch of grazing.

But if we examine still further into the present state of Irish agriculture, and, what is still more necessary to a right understanding of the subject, if we investigate its past history, we shall see that tillage has increased hitherto, in spite of the superior profit of grazing, and the indifference of the gentry, in consequence of the rapid increase of population among the small farmers, who have no other means of obtaining employment. It does not seem difficult to account for the apathy of the landlords in former days. There were many social and political causes which rendered them indifferent to the personal condition of the lower orders of their tenantry; and where the grazing was by nature so good, and the tillage commonly practised so ruinous, there was less inducement to attempt the improvement of the latter, and every motive to check its extension. It is curious, however, when we refer to the first books that were written upon Ireland, to find in them the very same complaints which are still made (whether justly or not) of the Irish landlords; that they have always been accused of preferring grazing to husbandry, and of endeavouring to eject the smaller class of farmers; and that their characteristic neglect of tillage has been noticed by so many authors, in an unbroken series, down to the present time. The facts which are related are

quite sufficient to account for the low ebb at which agriculture is now found ; and the only wonder is, that the growth of grain should not have been more effectually checked.

Fynes Moryson, who writes in the olden time, (A. D. 1617,) says, that " Gentlemen laboured more " to get new possessions for inheritance, than by " husbandry of their old lands to encrease their re- " venues." But even in those days, when, he says,* famines were frequent in Ireland, he adds,† " in " times of peace, the Irish transport good quantity " of corne, yet they may not transport it without " licence, lest on any sudden rebellion, the king's " forces and his good subjects should want corne." He tells his readers,‡ that " the plenty of grasse " makes the Irish have infinite multitudes of cattle," which were indeed their only property ; but he speaks of the stock in the most contemptuous terms, with reference both to their size and condition, and says that " onely the men and the greyhounds are of " great stature." He seems struck with the extreme zeal and determination evinced by the natives in defence of such miserable stock, which, he says, they will fight for as for their altars. His quaint way of mentioning this disinclination of the natives to submit quietly to utter destitution, reminds one strongly of the sentimental attachment which the Irish peasant of the present day is said to feel to his little farm ; which, in sober earnest, however wretched

* P. 163.

† Part iii. p. 161.

‡ Part iii. p. 159.

it may appear, both in point of size and quality, is still his only resource against starvation, and is really prized with the same sort of tenderness that a hungry labourer prizes his mid-day meal.

If we pass over a century of civil wars and confiscations, and come down to the reign of George II, we find Dean Swift, in his political papers, still making the same complaint in 1728. He says, that investments in land* were eagerly sought for, but that† “Gentlemen, instead of consulting “the ease of their tenants, or *cultivating their lands*, “were worrying one another upon points of Whig “and Tory, of High Church and Low Church, which “no more concerned them than the famous contro-“ versy of strops for razors; while *agriculture was wholly discouraged*, and consequently half the farmers, labourers, and poor tradesmen reduced to “beggary and banishment.” To render the parallel with the present time more exact, he attributes the discouragement of tillage, in another place,‡ to “the abominable race of graziers, who, upon expiration of the farmers’ leases, were ready to engross “great quantities of land, and the *gentlemen having been often ill paid*, and their land *worn out of heart*, were too easily tempted. Thus, a vast tract “of land, where twenty or thirty farmers lived, together with their cottagers and labourers, in their “several cabins, became all desolate and easily

* A Short View, p. 198.

† Answer to a Memorial, p. 216. ‡ P. 209.

“ managed by one or two herdsmen, and their boys ;
“ whereby the master-grazier seized to himself the
“ livelihood of a hundred people.”

Primate Boulter endeavoured about the same time to introduce a law for the increase of tillage, but without success. Mr. Arthur Dobbs,* in his Essay on the Trade of Ireland, (1727,) talks also of “ Gentlemen receiving or dismissing whole villages of native Irish at once ; and this is done just as gentlemen incline to break up their lands and improve them by tillage, or as they lay them down under grass, and enlarge their sheep-walks and grazing farms.”

But although the gentry, when taken individually, were most of them inattentive to the proper cultivation of their estates, they could not conceal from themselves the national inconvenience which this neglect occasioned. Ireland at that time did not grow corn enough for her own consumption,

* Page 7. This gentleman, who was a member of the Irish Parliament, and afterwards governor of Carolina, would find himself quite at home still upon Irish politics, if he was sitting in the House of Commons of the present day ; we have got nothing newer than his suggestions since his time. He advocates a union with England, free trade, relaxation of the penal laws against the Catholics, composition of tithe, improvement in agriculture, and a general poor law. Moreover, he is also a patron of the workhouse system,— though part of his plan consists of a curious device for forcing occupation on the sturdy pauper, which we can by no means recommend in any of the improved unions ; — he suggests that a pump-room should be built for them, “ where, being chained by the foot, they must pump or be drowned.”

and having a surplus revenue at command, the Irish House of Commons was as profuse in its parliamentary patronage of the interests of tillage, as its members were indifferent to the encouragement of their tenants in private. It is needless to unravel here the various contradictory measures which the parliament instituted in those days, according to the prevailing fashion, for the promotion of trade and national wealth. Bounties were given upon corn, as well as upon everything else. A bounty was devised upon the inland carriage of corn to Dublin, A.D. 1762, which increased according to the distance from whence it was carried; and is supposed by most Irish writers to have given the first impulse to tillage. Arthur Young, who wrote some years after, adopts this opinion; though at the end of his book he gives some arguments which throw great doubts on its correctness. A still greater legislative bonus was given in the year 1784,* when a bounty of 3*s.* 4*d.* a barrel on wheat, and 1*s.* 5*d.* on oats, was granted on the export from any part of Ireland, and the exports were shortly after swelled to a considerable amount.

Dobbs estimates† the average value of the corn imported into Ireland in his time (1727) at 39,063*l.* per annum, from which, however, some exports are to be deducted. Arthur Young‡ proves the average value of the corn imported into Ireland for

* Newenham's State of Ireland, p. 213.

† P. 20.

‡ P. 83.

seven years previous to 1778 to be 84,697*l.* per annum, from which he deducts the average export, 64,871*l.* Whereas the average export for three years previous to 1790, (which was twelve years after Arthur Young's tour, and only six years after the last-mentioned bounty,) was,*

Wheat	112,256
Oats	<u>312,993</u>
Total	425,249 quarters.

A fourth of this was sent to foreign parts, and it certainly was a very extraordinary instance of the rapid advance of tillage,—more singular, perhaps, than anything that has occurred since; though, in the space of the subsequent half century, the export has increased just sixfold, the proportions of each kind of grain remaining still the same, being about one-fourth wheat and three-fourths oats. Whether the extent of these exports was not also owing to the commercial independence which Ireland asserted for herself about that time, to the relaxation of the penal code, and to the increase of the population, rather than to the system of bounty alone, may admit of some question; but at all events it is certain, that between the year 1778 and the period of the union, Ireland became a corn *exporting* instead of an importing country. If this greatly-increased supply had been the result of a proportionate improvement in the mode of cropping, by which it was

* Parl. paper, Com: Ap. 18, 1834.

produced, it would have been an unmixed advantage : but, unfortunately, it was brought about mainly by inroads upon pasture and wastes, and (as in other manufactures extended by the unhealthy stimulus of a bounty) there was no corresponding amendment in the *system* upon which the cultivation was carried on.

The words of Arthur Young, in his description of Irish tillage, describe this exactly, and though they were written sixty years ago, they are but too applicable to the present mode of farming in Ireland. He says,† “ Tillage in Ireland is very little under-“ stood : * * * the bounty upon the inland carriage “ of corn has increased tillage very considerably, “ but it has nowhere introduced a better system ; “ and to this extreme bad management of adopting “ the exploded practice of a century ago, instead of “ turnips and clover, it is owing that Ireland, with “ a soil, acre for acre, much better than England, “ has its products inferior. But keeping cattle of “ every sort is a business so much more adapted “ to the laziness of the farmer, that it is no wonder “ the tillage is so bad ; it is everywhere left to the “ cottars, or *to the very poorest of the farmers* ; and “ were it not for potatoes, which *necessarily prepare* “ *for corn*, there would not be the half of what we “ see at present. Profit, in all undertakings, depends “ on capital ; and is it any wonder that the profit “ should be small when the capital is nothing at all ?

† App. p. 12.

“ *Every man that has one gets into cattle*, which will
“ give him an idle lazy superintendance, instead of
“ an active attentive one.”

§ III. *Sketch of the Present State of Tillage.*

THERE exist the most ample materials for a comparison between the defective mode of managing estates and cultivating farms in former times, as just described, and that which prevails at the present moment. The labours of the Commissioners of Poor Inquiry have never been sufficiently appreciated : they have compiled and published a much richer store of valuable information than seems to have been generally acknowledged ; and the public has not been led to read and understand it sufficiently. The Commissioners have not contented themselves with inquiring into the diseased condition of the poor only, but have sought out and collected ample materials from which the cause of the disease may be discovered, and the true remedy easily applied. They pointed their attention particularly to the most important branches of rural economy, and they directed a special and distinct inquiry to be instituted into the nature and state of agriculture in thirty-one different districts of Ireland by Assistant Commissioners selected for that express purpose, who seem to have been well qualified for their task. The remarks which they have

written on the subject* are buried so deep in the vast mass of papers which were printed by the Commission, that they have not attracted all the attention which they deserve ; but they will be found well worthy of the perusal of those who are anxious to make themselves acquainted with the most important economical features of the country, and the whole of that appendix should be carefully considered.

It certainly must be a matter of surprise and wonder, upon reading the report of this branch of the Irish Poor Inquiry, to find that a dense population not only subsists and multiplies so rapidly, but that it has annually increased its export of human food, in the degree which is noticed, without a larger amount of agricultural improvement. The absence of any important amendment in the mode of cropping since the days of Arthur Young, must strike the reader very forcibly. Improvements of other kinds may be noticed in Ireland,—there are better markets—improved breeds of cattle†—more mills—

* App. F.

† App. F. p. 389. The Assistant Commissioner states,—“ In most districts good cattle are to be found on the farms of gentlemen and resident proprietors ; but here excellent half-bred stock is seen on the smallest farms, and beautiful though rough-bred animals on the land of several farmers. This is the case in all those parts of the counties of Wicklow, Kildare, and Carlow, which meet in this neighbourhood ; the breed having been first introduced by Mr. La Touche, and thence into this district, chiefly from the stock of Mr. Archbold.”

better carts and ploughs, &c. ; but the course of tillage is still the same in all its essential features. It consists, simply, in taking one or two crops of potatoes from the ley, or grass sod, to which crop alone the manure of the farm is applied, and then taking a succession of corn crops, which follow one another without the intermission of a single season, till the powers of the soil are more or less exhausted ; after which it is *let out to rest*, as the process is termed, clothing itself for the first year or two with weeds, and soon after, in a space of time incredibly short, with a “skin” of self-sown grass, which, after it is improved in quality by rest and the power of nature, is soon subjected to a similar course of torture, and potatoes and corn are still the unvarying products. But the improved practice in Great Britain for many years has been, to keep up the constant fertility of the farms, so that the soil shall not require unprofitable rest ; and this can only be done by devoting a great proportion of the surface to green crops. These crops, when they are cultivated solely for the food of cattle, become, if consumed on the premises, directly convertible into the most valuable animal manure ; and it is in order to create manure of the best kind, that it is absolutely necessary to have a sufficient stock of cattle and green food on every arable farm, in proportion to its extent.

Agricultural experience teaches that in every case in which land is capable of producing tolerable

grass, it must be more profitable to graze it than to pursue the elsewhere exploded system of alternate exhaustion and slow recovery. And though the recovery may be somewhat quicker in Ireland than it would be in other countries, the same position holds equally good. For the means through which the soil recovers in Ireland, are derived from its tendency to clothe itself spontaneously with a coat of natural grass, even after the most scourging tillage. Thus this natural disposition of the soil to herbage,—which is its peculiar merit,—while it supplies a means of recovery from bad treatment, supplies at the same time the strongest motive to landlords to continue that exclusive preference for grazing which has been already adverted to ;—grazing being obviously more profitable, under such favourable circumstances, than bad tillage ; and occupiers with capital who wish to treat the land well, can make a safe profit from cattle, with little risk or labour, by taking advantage of these indigenous qualities of the ground.

The ruling defect of Irish tillage here pointed out varies necessarily in degree in the different districts visited by the Assistant Commissioners ; but it is needless to say, that where such a system exists, a capitalist who must hire labour to pursue it could not be remunerated ; and, accordingly, it is found that tillage is still “left to the cottars, or “to the very poorest of the farmers,” as Arthur

Young expressed it in his day, who work the ground with their own hands, not for profit, but for subsistence.

Thus an examination of the whole of the evidence which has been so copiously furnished on the state of husbandry, will lead irresistibly to the conclusion already stated,—that the annually increasing export of grain is attributable rather to the increasing *quantity* of tillage, than to the few scattered notices of improvement which are sometimes quoted in the system, and which are insufficient to produce such great results. For it is remarked that the export of grain has increased from *all* parts of Ireland, and very rapidly from those where no agricultural amendment whatever is visible; and as there is abundant evidence that the more substantial farmers do not increase *their* tillage, either by ploughing up more pasture or by reclaiming wastes, but, on the contrary, that they are keeping more of their lands in grass, the extension of tillage must be attributed to the gradual subdivision of farms among the poorer farmers, and to the work which has been achieved upon the bogs and mountains, which have been brought into cultivation by the same class of persons, as labourers on their own account. The inferior grain produced by the poorest cultivators is kept for home consumption, while the better description of corn is thereby spared for export to England.

There seems to be a vague idea, even among the very best informed persons, that tillage-farming in Ireland was at some undefined period conducted upon a larger scale than it is at present: even Mr. Senior, and Mr. George Lewis, though they do not directly state this in their reports to Lord John Russell, seem almost to take it for granted, but we have no evidence of the fact. It is undoubted that *farms* have diminished in size; but a perusal of Arthur Young's book leads to the conclusion that *tillage*-farming was never largely practised for profit; instances of it may be found, perhaps, in his Tour, but they are very few, and are not so frequent as might be quoted at the present day; so that the subdivision of farms which has occurred, has been either of *grazing* farms, where *no* tillage was practised, or of mixed arable and grazing, where little tillage has been converted into much tillage; and there seems no sufficient evidence that the average quantity of corn grown by each farmer has in any degree diminished. The subdivision of farms has been checked by the landlords as much as possible since the disfranchisement of the 40s. freeholders; but the evidence proves, that in the absence of any other mode of obtaining employment and subsistence for the family of the small farmer, the division of the farm among his children still silently continues; so that the breadth of tillage has a

tendency to keep pace with the increasing population, and with the demand for potato-ground, even when the profit on grass-land is relatively higher than the marketable profit on raising grain; and after one or two crops of potatoes have been obtained by the farmer for his own support, the land, though incapable of producing more potatoes, is still prepared for the growth of corn.

The existence of a very small class of farms in Ireland is universally known, but till lately there has been no means of forming any estimate of the extent to which the subdivision has been carried. The loose assertion of a tourist, who is surprised at the minute subdivision of the land, carries little weight with it, and is met by the counter-statement of some other traveller, who has seen a few large farms in the course of his journey. The more precise information obtained by the Poor Commission is, therefore, very valuable, and tends to show that the operations of tillage are generally conducted upon a smaller scale than is supposed possible in Great Britain. The larger farms are held by graziers; and the space occupied by tillage-farmers, in most of the Irish counties, is generally insufficient to afford them employment and subsistence, if it was devoted to grazing only.

The following summary of the average size of tillage-farms in the districts examined by the Assistant Commissioners is compiled from the evidence col-

lected by them ; and it exhibits at one view the diminutive proportion of tillage-farms, and proves that in the tillage districts, where most corn is grown, the farms are always the smallest. It appears, moreover, that we have not nearly witnessed the minimum of subdivision yet ; for in some counties the average sized tillage-farm is three acres Irish, or five acres English measure ; whereas thirty acres is more usual in other districts. It may be remarked, also, that in Connaught, which is the poorest part of the country, the land is either managed by large graziers, or, if cultivated at all, is worked by the very smallest and most necessitous description of farmers. In Ulster, where the population is most numerous, and where they have made the greatest advances in manufactures and wealth, there is found much more tillage, and the farms are more uniformly small : while in the remaining districts the soil is most luxuriant, the grazing most profitable, and the greatest exertions are used by the proprietors to prevent the subdivision of the farms.

Note.—The Assistant Commissioners do not state whether the acres which they quote are Irish or English measure. In Armagh and some counties of Ulster they are certainly statute English acres; but in Connaught and the other provinces they are probably Irish plantation measure, of which three are equivalent to five statute. They seem sometimes to have found a difficulty in ascertaining the correct average very positively; nor is it always clear whether the average which they state is of tillage-farms only, or of tillage *and* grazing holdings generally. Wherever they quote the latter, the figure in the column does not exhibit the true size of tillage-farms, and it ought to be a much lower number. Their own words are quoted as nearly as possible in the third column, and their qualifying observations in the fourth.

Average size of Tillage-farms, compiled from the Observations on Agriculture, Appendix F. p. 357 et seq.

County.	Berry (or Hundred).	Average size in Acres.	Observations.
CONNAUGHT.			
Galway ..	Kilconnel	Grassing district ; largest tillage-farm 70 acres.
Léitrim ..	Dromahair ..	Few more than ..	Grassing district.
.....	Mohill ..	Under ..	4 in. til.
.....	Murriak ..	Average ..	6 ..
Sligo ..	Carberry ..	Average ..	Tillage district ; largest tillage by one farmer 10 acres.
			3 ..
			3 .. Tillage district.
LEINSTER.			
Dublin....	Balrothery ..	Most from	10 to 30 Two-thirds tillage ; farms various sizes.
Kilkenny..	Galmoy ..	Average ..	20 to 30 Tillage district ; largest 80 acres.
.....	Gowran ..	Every size under 100, especially under	60 & 70 Mixed tillage and grass ; largest tillage 120 acres.
King's Co.	Clonlisk ..	Average from	10 to 30 Principally till. mixed with grassing, largest 121 acres.
.....	Philipstown ..	Average from	10 to 20 Half tillage and half grass.
Louth ...	Dundalk ..	Most of 30 or 40, or probably less	Tillage farms, one half grass.
Meath....	Up. & Lr. Kells ..	Average from	20 to 50 Two-thirds pasture.
.....	Moyernagh ..	Usual size 30 to 50, of which one half grass	Tillage and grass.
Queen's Co.	Maryborough ..	Average ..	20 .. Chiefly tillage.
.....	Portnahinch ..	Average ..	20 ..
Wicklow ...	Talbotswood ..	Most from 30 to 40, of which one-fifth tilled.	Mixed tillage and grass ; largest tillage 50 acres. Dairy farms of all sizes.

STATE OF TILLAGE.

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		MUNSTER.			
Clare	Corcomroe	Most from	10 to 30	Arable dis. "I know a farmer who tills above 20 acres.	
Kerry	Iveragh	Average stock 4 to 12 cows, many less.		Mountainous grazing.	
	Trughenacny.	Average stock 6 to 10 cows—more and less.		More pasture than tillage; largest tillage over 30 acres.	
Limerick.	Connello	Average till. from	20 to 30	More til. than grazing; one farm has more than 100.	
Cochlea	Do. under	20		{ Til. and grass for dairy farms, not more than 30 to 50 acres tilled.	
		Farms under 1 acre	280		
		Do. from 1 to 5	1,056		
		5 to 10	745		
		10 to 20	759		
		20 to 50	551		
		50 to 80	127		
		80 to 100	20		
		Do. above	70		
		Average	20 to 50	Equally pasture and tillage, largest tillage 30 to 40.	
Waterford	Decies	Average	10 to 20	Dairy district,	40 to 60.
	Middlethird	If a farmer holds 60, he ploughs from 10 to 20			
		ULSTER.			
Armagh	Fews	Average	8 to 10	Nearly all tillage.	
Cavan	Loughrea	———	6 to 8	Two-thirds tillage.	
Down	Iveagh	Unusual	3 to 10	Tillage district, one family holds above 60 in tillage.	
	Leitrim	Average	16 to 20	Tillage district, largest 100.	
Fermanagh	Tyrkennedy	———	10 to 12	Tillage farms, of which two-thirds ploughed.	
Monaghan	Monaghan	———	8 to 10	Altogether a tillage district.	
Tyrone	Omagh	———	12	Tillage ; few more than 40 or 50 acres.	

A vast majority of the witnesses, particularly those examined by Mr. Power and Mr. Binns, are of opinion that the produce of the crop per acre is greater on the small than on the larger farms; but be that as it may, the evidence shows everywhere, that the larger the farm, the smaller is the proportion of it allotted to tillage, and the greater is the extent of grazing; the largest farmers cultivate as much ground as will yield them potatoes and straw for their own consumption, and make their rent off the remainder by fattening cattle on the natural grass: where the grass is not rich enough for fattening, the land has been cut up, either by middlemen or landlords, into smaller portions for dairy management; these form the second class of farms. The third and lowest class seems to have arisen from the subdivision of the second, and is occupied by the tillage-farmer, who frequently becomes so merely from the increase of population, and the process of subdivision. A. who farms twenty acres, may and does graze fifteen of them; but B. and C. his sons, who inherit ten each, must till nearly the whole of their land.

The natural question that has ever presented itself to the mind of the landlord under this state of things has been, whether this process of subdivision was consistent with his interest or not:— the occasion and cause of tillage in Ireland, as has been just shown, is the necessity which arises among an unemployed population for potatoes and potato-

ground ; and their competition necessarily ensures the offer of a higher *nominal* rent than the landlord can obtain from the same quantity of land under grass. But the difficulty of dealing with a multitude of paupers, instead of the substantial grazier, occasions still that vacillation in the conduct of the gentry which was condemned by Dean Swift and Mr. Dobbs a hundred years ago ; — they feel, too late, that if the subdivision is carried on any further, the soil, which must deteriorate under such tillage, will neither be capable of producing food for the population, nor any surplus from which it will be possible to derive rent for themselves :—so, while some landlords submit passively to the course of events, others are always found who seem anxious to relinquish a portion of the rent promised from their tillage-farms, in hopes of obtaining a more certain income from the more legitimate profits of the grazier. And although this wish is a very natural one on the part of all landlords, and a laudable one among some, it must still be limited by the possibility of obtaining subsistence for the farmers as they are called, (or, more probably speaking, the labourers,) thus turned out of their occupations.

So much has been said and written in Great Britain in favour of the consolidation of farms, — on the advantages derived from the *increased* capital thereby expended in their cultivation, — and of the extent to which Irish landlords have

lately determined to enforce that alteration; that it may, perhaps, be generally supposed that the latter have sought only to proceed upon the same plan of action which has been successful in Great Britain. The evidence on this subject reported by the Poor Commissioners leads us, however, to a different conclusion. It appears, that the same mistake which was reprobated by Dean Swift is still prevalent; — that the capital employed on the enlarged farms is smaller than the aggregate of the paltry sums invested by the former husbandmen; — that the plausible term of consolidation, instead of conduced to the improvement of cultivation, is only a convenient synonym to cloak the extension of grazing; — and if the altered farms have not been invariably thrown into grass, it has been found at least, that the quantity of cultivation thereon has been always considerably diminished. This certainly is a very remarkable fact, and sufficiently accounts for the great unpopularity which is known to attend the practice. If the landlords had attempted to introduce a better system of cropping on the consolidated farms, or had paid much attention to the fate of those who had formerly worked the soil, they would have enlisted the sympathy of the public on their side; but to throw the land into grass, and to throw the population out of employment, has never been openly justified; and such a course may easily be rendered unnecessary, by making active efforts to improve the sys-

tem of tillage, and render it as profitable as grazing ; which *can* be done by introducing the convertible system of husbandry, and by raising artificial food for cattle.

Upon an analysis of the evidence that has been collected on this subject, however, it will be found, that the system of consolidation has been more remarkable for the suffering which it has occasioned, in those places where it has been tried, than for the extent to which it has hitherto been carried. Out of thirty-one districts, examined by the Assistant Commissioners, instances of consolidation have been noticed in thirteen *buronies** (or *hundreds*) only, and on the farms so treated, the quantity of produce has been diminished, except in one doubtful instance, which has occurred in Conelloe, (Limerick,) where the land has been continued in tillage ; some advantage also is noticed from certain trifling instances of consolidation in two other baronies,† but the size of the enlarged farms is still only about ten acres each. It does not follow, however, that in the thirteen baronies here quoted, the general size of the farms would be found to be on the in-

<i>* Barony.</i>	<i>County.</i>	<i>Barony.</i>	<i>County.</i>
1. Murrisk,	Mayo.	8. Moyfernah,	Meath.
2. Dromahair,	Leitrim.	9. Maryborough,	Queen's Co.
3. Babrothery,	Dublin.	10. Portnahinch,	Ditto.
4. Gowran,	Kilkenny.	11. Talbotstown,	Wicklow.
5. Philipstown,	King's Co.	12. Conelloe,	Limerick.
6. Dundalk,	Louth.	13. Middlethird,	Waterford.
7. Kells,	Meath.		

† 1. Corcomroe, Co. of Clare. 2. Carbery, Co. of Sligo.

crease, if an average was taken of the whole, as the desire of the farmers to subdivide their land among their children, which they do in spite of their landlords, may counterbalance the instances of consolidation. Accordingly, we find that there are only five baronies* where the average size of farms is said to be positively increasing; and as there are but too many painful causes of notoriety accompanying the instances of consolidation, and as there is as much silence and concealment practised as possible in the subdivision of farms, there is still room to doubt whether the fact of increase, even in these five districts, was not overstated to the Assistant Commissioners.

Evidence of the great anxiety shown by the landlords towards the junction of farms abounds equally everywhere, but they are restrained by feelings of humanity and by Captain Rock.

It must be remarked, also, that the competition for land has produced another chain of causes which conspires to defeat the landlords. The great competition for land forces up the rents, — the high rents tend to diminish agricultural capital. Where capital is deficient, the farmer, *in the first instance*, will always be more inclined to graze than to cultivate his ground,† the lat-

* 1. Dundalk; 2. Kells; 3. Maryborough; 4. Talbots town;
5. Coneloe.

† The articles most usually omitted by superficial observers in estimating the capital required for arable farming are, the stock of manure which is necessary, and the wages of the la-

ter operation requiring such a much larger outlay on a given space; but when his diminishing capital becomes inadequate to stock the whole ground, even as a grazier, he *must* resign a portion of his farm, or, if other circumstances enable him to do so, he will endeavour to sub-let it to under-tenants, who promise him a still higher rent than that which he pays. If farming capital diminishes therefore, farms must inevitably diminish in size.

bourers. When the farmer is his own labourer, they omit to estimate the food required for himself and family during the first year. Thus fifty acres occupied in tillage by ten families require ten times as much food in store (representing capital for wages) as the same quantity of land held by one grazier; and when really well and profitably farmed, the cattle (consuming artificial food) may not be very much fewer on fifty acres of arable, than on fifty acres of natural grass.

Extreme cases have sometimes been seen in Ireland where persons have got possession of a very rich farm, without money enough to stock the whole of it even as graziers; and have ploughed up a part without manure, in order to stock the remainder out of the profits of the crop, thus stolen from the impoverished ground. It is as well to remark, therefore, that solitary instances of that kind do not destroy the truth of the proposition stated above. Because such an expedient is perfectly ruinous, and it is impossible to pay the fair rent of the ground under such a system. It is like a tradesman who parts with some of his best tools, in order to purchase materials wheron to work with the remainder; and who could never stand against a competitor with sufficient capital. Whereas a grazier with a small capital, sufficient for grazing, can compete advantageously with a tillage-farmer, on equal spaces of ground, though the latter may have a larger capital than the grazier's. It often happens that the farmer's capital, though larger than the grazier's, is still insufficient for good husbandry.

But again, if the space becomes circumscribed as well as the capital, the extent of ground will become insufficient at last to afford a subsistence out of the profits of grazing : and the only means that remain by which the farmer can derive advantage from the ground, is to employ his own labour in aid of his capital, and from a grazier to become a tillage-farmer. This process is constantly going on in Ireland : we cannot be surprised, therefore, that the landlords have been unable to counteract difficulties which they have sometimes opposed, but which they have not hitherto attempted to remove.

Instances of consolidation have been most frequent in those districts where the natural qualities of the soil have offered most pressing temptations to the landlords to overlook the unhappy consequences of the change, and where vegetation affords most facilities for turning tillage into pasture. They are noticed by the Commissioners as having principally occurred in the southern and midland counties, where the land is richest, and where it reverts most quickly to a luxuriant herbage ; and as these districts are usually the most disturbed by agrarian outrages, it is probable that this remarkable quality of the soil in Ireland, and its tendency to throw up the finest grass spontaneously, may occasionally have had some indirect effect on the peace of the country.

The desire of joining small holdings for the purpose of creating a ten-pound franchise, supplies the

landlords with another motive for consolidation; where they can venture to act upon it; and it seems that many of them pay more attention to the extension of their political influence, and to other* extraneous objects in the management of their estates, than to the details by which their land may be made most profitable to themselves and to their tenants.

The most remarkable feature which is noticed by the Assistant Commissioners in the conduct of the Irish landlords as a body, is “the general indifference and ignorance displayed by themselves and their agents in the management of rural affairs.”[†] There are many landlords who, from good feeling and from motives of humanity, &c. attend to some improvements in farming, as they do occasionally to the advancement of cleanliness or education; but, speaking generally, these matters are said to be much less considered than in Great Britain, and are not done in the shape of business and bargain. A landlord who looks after his Irish estate, does so, and is supposed to do so, from motives of philanthropy only. This idea has led both landlords and tenants into the most fatal errors. The landlords who exercise any attention towards their tenants are usually rewarded with the most boundless gratitude; but sometimes they lay claim to that recompence in a way which jars with the feelings of their dependants, and a grating discord is produced,—

* App. F. p. 93, &c.

† App. F. p. 381, p. 411, &c.

which induces them to quit the country in disgust. Oftener still, the most cunning and least deserving of the tenantry press so hard on a willing and liberal person, as to produce in his mind a suspicion of design ; which, combined with a conviction of the inadequacy of his resources to meet the demands thus made upon him, leads to a total abandonment of supposed improvements ; because they have not been of that description which will increase his means of doing good, by adding to his income. In a word, the connexion between landlord and tenant (speaking generally and nationally) has never yet been placed upon its sound footing,—that of a mutual interest. Bad landlords have been looked upon as tyrants only, instead of being looked upon as fools. Good landlords have been looked upon as meritorious persons, instead of being considered wise and prudent.

A great proof of the national indifference to agriculture is found in the fact, that no mode of tillage is prescribed by the landlords to their tenants even in the most modern leases. The encouragement given to tenants is often liberal enough, but the shape in which it is afforded is found usually to consist only in low rents and long leases (indeed, the length of the leases is often exceedingly injudicious) : but no interference in the mode of cropping is attempted, and the only restrictive clauses which the Commissioners could hear of, in the course of their inquiries, were, for restraining

tenants from tilling their grass-land, and to prevent sub-letting, which, in other words, means the same thing. These restrictions are very usual, but it has been found in all cases very difficult, and often quite impossible to enforce them.

§ IV. *Means of Improving Agriculture.*

It must strike all those who inquire into the past and present state of agriculture in Ireland, that the landlords (taken as a body) have, hitherto, generally considered the condition of the tillage-farmers, and of their farms, as too hopeless to admit of any efficient remedy. Vague projects of improvement have been suggested by speculative persons, and gentlemen who have a taste for farming indulge it with most expensive profusion ; but they have not made themselves sufficiently acquainted with the minor details of that bad branch of farming which exists among their poor tenantry. A mistaken idea has always prevailed, that it is impossible to improve the native farmers, unless a certain proportion of them are supplanted by more skilful foreigners, who will practise the latest improvements under their eyes ; accordingly, some pains have been taken at different times to suggest private and national schemes for that purpose. In the reign of George I. a large colony of Protestant Palatines was brought over by Lord Southwell, and their numerous descendants are still to be found in the counties of

Limerick and Tipperary ; but the cost was great, and the scheme, as far as improvement went, was abortive. Since that time Mr. Newenham in 1808, and Mr. Trimmer in 1809, tried to call the attention of the public to similar plans for bribing sundry honest English farmers into the country at the rate of 300*l.* a piece for stock and capital ; but these expensive projects fell still-born from their parents.

Arthur Young, whose observations are written in the very best spirit, shows the impolicy of such a scheme. He says,* “A few considerable landlords, “many years ago, made the experiment of fixing, “at great expense, colonies of Palatines on their “estates ; some of them I viewed, and made many “inquiries ; the scheme did not appear to me to answer. They had houses built for them, plots of “land assigned to each, at a rent of favour, assisted “in stock, and all of them with leases for lives “from the head landlord. *The poor Irish are very rarely treated in this manner* ; where they are, “they work much greater improvements than are “common among these Germans—witness Sir William Osborne’s Mountaineers. A few beneficial “practices were introduced, but never travelled “beyond their farms ; they were viewed with eyes “too envious to allow them to be patterns, and it “was human nature that it should be so ; but *encourage a few of your own poor, and if their practices thrive they will spread.*”

* P. 18.

A society was established in the year 1731, principally for the improvement of Agriculture, which was called the Dublin Society, and has the merit* of being the parent of all similar societies now existing in Europe; but it was soon diverted rather to the protection of manufactures than of agriculture, and the private subscriptions of the members were overlaid by a grant of the Irish Parliament of ten thousand pounds. A model-farm, which they established near Dublin, was soon occupied in making experiments inapplicable to the interests of the general farmer, and being managed at a ruinous expense, was shortly abandoned.

The Farming Society, which was set on foot about the time of the Union, met with no better success in the agricultural part of its labours. The gentlemen who conducted it were apparently imbued with the national prejudice, which seems to consider tillage as a sort of necessary evil, which only admits of palliatives; and they directed all their real energy to the improvement of the stock of the graziers, in which they had much success. It would be wrong to undervalue the great amount of national gain which has been achieved in this way. Dobbs calculates that the average weight of a fat ox in Ireland in 1730, was four hundred weight, and that it took five years to bring them up to that weight. It is now usual to send them to market double that weight, and this great additional advantage is ob-

* Young, p. 67.

tained — that they are now fattened in three years and a half instead of five years: but the system of husbandry was not altered by the labours of the Farming Society, and it paid very little attention to that branch of a farmer's business. The most useful boon which it conferred on tillage was the introduction of the Scotch plough and cart into Ireland. It was supported by a grant of public money, which has been discontinued, and the Society no longer exists.

It was reserved for Mr. Blacker of Armagh to advocate the cause of the tillage-farmers with more spirit, system, and success than has yet been seen. The little pamphlet which he published some five or six years ago, in explanation of his views, has done incalculable good. His object has been to point out to the Irish landlords the facility with which they can adapt the modern system of farming, even to the most minutely-divided estate. The great merit of his plan is its perfect simplicity, *and that he takes the state of things as he finds them*: he asks for no shipping of tenants to America, no reduction of rents, no large outlay of money on roads, or farm-houses, or double posts and rails:— these are all most excellent things in their way, and may be encouraged when they can be afforded; but they are expensive, and the most economical species of improvement is that which stimulates the farmer to find additional work and profit for himself on his own ground.

Mr. Blacker observed, that the principal defect upon Irish arable farms, was not so much the deficiency of farm-buildings, which English tourists are apt to remark, as the absence of sufficient live-stock to put into them; and what is worse, the inadequate supply of food for the stock to consume; and as long as matters are in that state, no farmer can prosper. Where there is little or no timber on an estate, (as in Ireland and Scotland,) it will seldom suit landlords to undertake the repair of buildings, whatever English gentlemen may suppose: but a proper superintendence they are bound to organize. Mr. Blacker found, not only that farms were small, but that however limited in size, the farmer's capital was still smaller in proportion; or in other words, that however small the farm might be with reference to extent, it was usually *too large* with reference to capital: His object, therefore, is to show each individual tenant how he can enter little by little upon an entirely new course of cropping; how he may find additional employment and profit within the narrow limits of his farm; and thereby create additional capital.

The outline of the convertible system of husbandry, which is the wealth of modern landlords, consists shortly in raising yearly, on a portion of each farm, as much green food for cattle as will suffice (by means of their animal manure) to restore the fertility of that other portion of the farm, which has been exhausted by the effort of produ-

cing grain; and making these portions alternate annually, so that a year of green crop (which is a year of rest) shall always intervene in each field after the season of effort, or corn ; and thus every part of the farm be preserved in the highest state of fertility of which it is susceptible.

The varieties of farming which may be practised under this outline are endless, and it is not necessary to dwell on them here ; suffice it to say, that the difficulty of commencing a proper rotation of crops, may be estimated by the difficulty of obtaining manure enough, in the first instance, to raise the turnip-crop required, and money sufficient to buy the cattle to eat it. When that is once effected, each field will yield its share of profit to the owner ; and whether the farm be large or small, if it is to be tilled at all, this system (except upon *very* stiff clays) should equally be adopted. *But the difficulty is, to begin* ; and it is feared that mere instruction, and the establishment of model agricultural schools, will not be sufficient to stimulate or to enable the majority of Irish farmers to try these new experiments, unless they are carried on under their own eyes, by farmers in exactly their own grade of life. They have no manure, except what is required for the potato-crop, and no money to buy additional stock.

Mr. Rait, a practical Scotch farmer, has cultivated seven hundred acres in the King's County in the most approved manner for twenty years. He

pays forty-two shillings per acre rent, and makes a handsome profit, and yet the neighbouring farmers * "are quite ignorant of any means of improvement;" which shows that example alone is not sufficient, unless that example is set by persons in their own grade of life, and having similar resources.

The method by which Mr. Blacker encourages an alteration in the present system is, by promising to lend each tenant who is willing to try the experiment as much lime, or other calcareous manure, as is required for his potato-crop, provided he consents to give up a portion of the dung of the farm for the growth of turnips ; and the repayment of this loan is not required till the end of the rotation. He does not generally attempt to fatten cattle, for which there would be but a limited sale *at present*; but he recommends that the green food should be devoted to dairy-cows, in the management of which the people are already skilled, and by which more profitable employment is created ; and they are to be fed constantly in the cow-house. Besides this, he lends the tenants seed, and sometimes, also, money to buy additional live stock ; but

* This is quoted from App. F. p. 380. It may be added, however, that there are other remarks elsewhere, which somewhat qualify these observations. In truth, the example of Mr. Rait has been of *some* advantage to the neighbouring farmers : though his presence has not been by many degrees *so* useful to them as it would have been, if he had worked in a different style, and on the ordinary scale.

the whole of these loans are immediately called in whenever any deviation is made from the mode of cropping prescribed ; and the proper cultivation of the ground affords ample security for the money lent, as the additional profits made by improved farming, are sufficient to enable the tenant to repay the value of the manure at the end of the rotation ; so that in point of fact Mr. Blacker has been regularly repaid all the money which has been so liberally advanced.

The details of this plan are entrusted to a practical Scotch agriculturist, who visits each tenant, and sees that the instructions are complied with on the spot. Indeed, the particular nature of the details themselves are not matters of general interest, nor are they worthy of any comment here ; the advantage of Mr. Blacker's system consists in the practical exemplification of an useful rule in the management of Irish estates. The proprietors of land should learn from it, that it behoves them to organize *some* efficient system of inspection, encouragement, and agricultural advice on their estates, into however large a number of small farms they may be subdivided, even if no agricultural novelties are introduced ; for there is as much variety under the old, bad style of farming as under the good, and as great difference in the relative merit of the different farmers ; but the innumerable details of their petty business have been considered

beneath attention, and they have been hitherto treated with too little discrimination.

It is generally supposed, that Mr. Blacker's system is only applicable to tillage districts ; but it is, in fact, equally applicable to *every* estate ; for the introduction of turnips and clover may be called merely an accidental part of his system. The estates which he superintends are arable, and the introduction of turnips and clover is the improvement most urgently required, and most difficult to introduce upon such estates. But on grazing estates, the same system of inspection should be arranged, to incite improvements in live stock, and in the mode of keeping cattle. Graziers should be encouraged to expend their capitals in this manner with profit, rather than to invest their returns in stocking a larger farm, and turning out small holders for that purpose.

The result of Mr. Blacker's labours will be best described in the words of Mr. Binns, the Assistant Commissioner, who passed through his district in the progress of his inspection, and the systematic manner in which the experiment has been conducted is so novel, and so important, that it may be worth while to dwell a little upon this part of his report. Mr. Binns says,* " Agriculture appears to have made great advances in a few years, in the county of Armagh, and in the barony of Lower Fews in

* Appendix, F. p. 417.

"particular. This advance is mainly to be attributed to the skill and exertions of William Blacker, Esq., agent to the Earl of Gosford and Colonel Close; he having introduced the system of green crops and stall-feeding, in opposition to the very injurious one of taking successive crops of grain. The farms in this barony are very small, say three to ten English acres. * * * This practice of raising green crops for the summer food of cattle in the house, is greatly superior to the one in general use in England, of allowing the cattle to roam at large in the pastures. * * * On the various small farms which I inspected, I have ascertained, that on a farm of four or five acres, at a rent of 1*l.* per English acre, a man may maintain his family, *pay his rent from the sale of his butter only*, and have grain to sell. * * * Every corner also is cultivated with the greatest care, and even in the mountain districts, patches of land amongst rocks, inaccessible to horses, are cultivated by the hand. The country, when seen from any elevation, is one continuous patch-work of grain and potatoes, densely crowded with habitations. This has a most striking appearance to an Englishman, as there are no hedge-row trees to intercept the profuse exhibition of fields of grain, now ripe for harvest."

In another place he says,† "Though opposing the stubborn habits and prejudices of the people,

† Appendix, F. p. 307.

“ yet being in a situation to enforce obedience to
“ his commands, Mr. Blacker has succeeded in con-
“ ferring a permanent benefit upon a vast number
“ of these men already, by introducing a manage-
“ ment of their small farms, which has raised several
“ from indigence to independence, and has given
“ such a spur to industry, that not only have the
“ circumstances of those who adopted his advice
“ and directions been improved, but even their
“ habits have been altered for the better, and their
“ characters raised. It was the answer of several
“ farmers, that the green crops required more la-
“ bour, and that *they employed all the members of*
“ *the family in one way or other*; a higher enco-
“ mium could not be passed on any system. Others
“ stated, that it forced on them the necessity of
“ building little dairies, and cow-houses, and caused
“ a *desire of comfort* about their houses, which they
“ never felt before.”

It is remarkable what a melancholy contrast is exhibited in the very next page of Mr. Binn's report, where we find him in the neighbouring county of Cavan, and it will be as well to extract a few lines of it, for the purpose of presenting a specimen of the opposite state of things. The farms are about the same size as in Armagh, but † “ Scarcely “ any lime or marl is used for the purposes of agri-“ culture, which is in the most wretched state ima-“ ginable. * * * The rotation is — first, potatoes

† Appendix, F. p. 418.

" from ley; second, potatoes repeated, with some
" manure; third, wheat, flax, barley, or oats;
" fourth, fifth, and sixth, oats; seventh, potatoes
" manured; and so on, as long as they can. Not
" much wheat is grown, and is of superior quality.
" If they have a field in ley, likely to yield a better
" crop on which to exercise this scourge-system,
" they leave the land that they have deprived of its
" productive powers, to come round by time, for
" a repetition of their former operations. Very
" little clover is grown, no rape nor turnips, and
" no stall-feeding in summer. Their miserable
" pastures are full of weeds in place of grass, and
" there are no clauses in leases, as regards proper
" agriculture. The farmers do as they like about
" cropping their grounds," &c.

The publications of Mr. Blacker have certainly contributed to excite a more general movement towards the interests of tillage in Ireland, than has hitherto been seen; but he is probably too sanguine as to the extent of surface over which he supposes that this has hitherto acted. He has brought over nearly seventy Scotch agriculturists, who have been distributed over every province of Ireland, not for the purpose of farming on their own account, but to inspect the estates of different gentlemen who have applied to him for advice. The disinterested benevolence with which he has exerted himself in so good a cause, cannot be too highly appreciated; and these Scotchmen, to their praise be it spoken,

have conducted themselves admirably ; they must ultimately succeed in introducing many improvements, but it is not to be expected that the results can be equally striking everywhere. The gentlemen have so seldom any real taste for tillage-farming, and for personal inspection of their properties, they are themselves so doubtful of the truth of Mr. Blacker's theory,— they are so irresolute as to the degree to which it should be pressed, and have so little of the zeal which the author himself displays, that it must be many years before it can creep into general use.

There seems every probability, however, that *in time* it will ultimately prevail. The assistant commissioners say,* “ But the surest proof of the advantage of any system of farming is the spontaneous adoption of it by other farmers who have no incentive to follow it, but the improvement it brings with itself: not only is the green-crop feeding followed by those over whom Mr. Blacker has control, but the farmers on the neighbouring estates, seeing the bettered condition of those who had taken to green crops, have also adopted it, so that in the entire barony there are not many small farmers who have not in some degree fallen into the green-crop feeding. That the farms of those who have adopted this system are in better condition than the farms of those following the old system, the Assistant Commissioners

* Appendix, F. p. 307.

" bear testimony, as they personally inspected numbers of both." * * *

" Mr. Barnes of Armagh informed the Assistant Commissioners, that a few years ago he got the management of Mr. Wilson's estate near Armagh, the rental of which is about 2,000*l.* per annum; that when he undertook the management the tenants were in a very distressed condition, and greatly in arrear, but that immediately he adopted Mr. Blacker's system, he lent them lime, and clover seed, and forced them into the green crops; and the consequence was, that they have since paid the rent regularly, besides paying for the lime and seeds, and discharging the arrear, at the rate of 500*l.* per annum." * * *

" Yet there are some even still who, contrary to their own conviction, prefer growing grain crop after grain crop, without any manure, and of course, without any profit. This is sufficient to show how difficult it must have been to introduce this improved plan of management, before it was proved advantageous by the people's own experience, and what fixed purpose and firmness it required in any man to work against lazy habits and inveterate prejudices. But fortunately the system was in the hands of Mr. Blacker, a man of firmness and prudence, and one whom his country cannot fail to honour as a benefactor."

Some persons who set their faces against the system, do so under the erroneous impression that

it tends to favour the further subdivision of land : it is true that Mr. Blacker has advocated the cause of the smallest occupiers, and has entreated their landlords not to turn them out ; for even when that process is accompanied with the rare alternative of gratuitous conveyance to America, it must be admitted that *forced* emigration is a very heartless sort of charity. Mr. Blacker has also ably pointed out the advantages which a small farmer possesses over a large one ; and though he does not pretend that these are sufficient to counterbalance the economical maxim, that capital can be more favourably employed in masses than in detached sums ; yet where we find, as in Ireland, that there are actually *no* masses of capital disposable for the purposes of tillage, in the hands of farmers whose skill could make it available ; and when we find that there are many minute and detached masses of capital, at this moment employed and vested in tillage, it is surely desirable to make the best of the existing situation of things, and glean any advantages which it is capable of producing.

Skill in farming should never be considered of itself a sufficient substitute for capital ; therefore a farmer should not commence his operations without a sufficient capital : but a very small amount of skill superadded to existing capitals, will cause them to increase at a very rapid and surprising rate, and thus enable farmers to undertake a more extended culture ; for in truth the objection taken

to Mr. Blacker's system is totally without force : the mode of husbandry recommended by him has nothing in itself of novelty,—it is well known to be applicable to large farms, and he desires to see it practised on farms of all sizes : he does not desire to see *profitable* grazing converted into tillage, but he wishes that bad tillage should be converted into good tillage ; and the question is, where there are no large tillage farms, what is to be done with the small ones. He has shown, both in theory and in practice, that he has adopted the best method of treating them, not only for the advantage of the present occupiers, but also for the object of ultimately increasing their size : he teaches every man, however small the extent of his ground may be, the way to employ it most profitably ; and he enables him thereby to create a capital with which he may purchase an addition to his occupation, or which will enable him to provide for his children without cutting up his farm among them.

It has been found that the men who have followed Mr. Blacker's instructions most attentively, have in every instance been enabled to add to the extent of their farms, either by buying the tenant right of some of their neighbours who have *voluntarily* taken themselves to America or elsewhere, or by selling the interest in their own land and purchasing a larger farm at a distance. It is well known that the children of farmers who are brought up with some comforts at home, are not willing to part with

these, (however trifling they may appear to an indifferent person,) and engage in such early and improvident marriages as are seen among their poorer and more reckless neighbours; so that instead of a spirit of subdivision the very opposite principle has been introduced, the most valuable sort of consolidation—which acts of itself,—which does not proceed upon the caprice of a third party, the landlord, but upon the very best and most legitimate basis, that of the desire of investing an accumulation of profits, in the manner most eligible to the holder, converting the cottar into the small farmer, and the small farmer gradually into the large farmer. It is true that this principle, if left to itself, may be a long time in working any great results, but there is no reason why it should be left to itself; and it is contended that an increasing quantity of disposable agricultural capital *must* of necessity precede any legitimate or extensive increase in the present size of farms, if they are to be continued in productive tillage; and that it is impossible to find tenants who shall be successful upon large tillage farms till they have first learnt how to accumulate profit upon smaller ones; so that if farms are to be successfully increased, it is probable that the consolidation must be fully as gradual as the subdivision has been. The difficulty of finding eligible labourers is also to be considered: small farmers suddenly turned out could never be expected to perform good work as labourers for a capitalist who had violently displaced

them ; besides, the general want of occupation for the men in Ireland has prevented the regular use of boys in husbandry, who are consequently ill-trained to work, and exhibit in manhood marks of indolence as well as a want of skill and discipline as labourers, which requires much looking after, and would be a source of great loss to a large farmer at present. This is a disadvantage which it will probably require the lapse of a generation to remove.

But admitting that an estate must be farmed at some disadvantage by a multitude of small capitalists, that consequently the Irish farmers cannot reap the same profits as their British competitors, and that a vast quantity of labour and some wealth is wasted when thus employed—let us ask what other course can be generally pursued ? The establishment of extensive works, and the employment of the occupiers of land at day-wages, has not been found to pay the proprietors for the outlay, nor has it been sufficient to effect a permanent improvement in the redundant population, so that it never has been, and probably cannot be extensively attempted with success. To take an instance of this in a western county, the Assistant Commissioners state, that,* “on the estate of Lord ———, the “ tenants are anxious to obtain employment on the “ extensive improvements carried on by his Lord-“ ship ; the overseer finds it impossible to employ all

* Page 41.

" the applicants, and each month he puts the names
" of a considerable number into a hat, and those
" who draw out their own names form the list of
" persons to be employed for the next four weeks,
" at the end of which time the lottery is again re-
" peated." And yet it is stated in another place,†
that this same "Lord ——— does not *draw any-*
thing from his estates,—he expends all the rents in
" improvements ; but still the *tenantry are extremely*
" *wretched.*"—Or in other words, Lord ——— sub-
mits to a sacrifice greater than he is called upon to
make, of which the direct profit to himself is more
than doubtful, and the advantages to his tenantry
are hitherto almost imperceptible ; for their own
energies have, perhaps, not been called into play,
their own trifling capitals have perhaps not been
sufficiently considered, and they have been hitherto
wasted upon an unproductive sort of agriculture,
whereof a most deplorable account is given by the
Assistant Commissioners.

But though it may be a matter of regret, that the success of this most benevolent landlord should not be as great as the excellence of his intentions deserves, it is certain that the works of Blacker, Martin Doyle, &c., have at length had some effect in proving to the gentry the necessity of beginning at the right end, that is, with tillage farms *as they are*, before they attempt to work upwards. The following extract from an advertisement in another

† Page 148.

county shows upon what an incredibly minute principle farming is carried on in Ireland.

“COUNTY OF LONGFORD AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY,
1836, &c. &c. &c.

“PREMIUMS.

“*Gentlemen's Class. Green Crops.*

“To the gentleman or his steward, who shall produce the best bunch of turnips, (12 roots) taken from a crop of not less than half an acre—
“a silver medal.”

* * * *

“*Stock Show, &c. &c. &c.*

* * * *

“*Farmer's Class. Green Crops.*

“To the farmer who shall produce the best bunch of turnips, (12 roots) taken from a crop of not less than half a rood - - - thirty shillings.”

“The best bunch of mangel wurzel, from not less than half a rood - - - thirty shillings.”

* * * *

It must excite an involuntary smile among English agriculturists to find the association of an entire county acting upon such a diminutive scale; there must be a beginning to everything, however; and though the effort may appear ludicrously small, it is in point of fact a laudable example.

There are several causes which concur at the present moment to favour the progress of agricul-

tural improvement in Ireland. In the first place, it is now admitted that the same qualities of climate, which are so remarkably favourable to the growth of herbage in that country, are equally favourable to other green crops; turnips, rape, vetches, clover, &c. which flourish most luxuriantly, and can be cultivated on farms of all sizes. Next must be considered the amendment which has taken place in the habits of the gentry, and the progress which is at last making in the education of the people; an improvement which Sir John Sinclair justly quotes as one of the main causes of the advancement of agriculture in Scotland. But, above all, there is to be noticed, the recent composition of tithe in Ireland; — this unfortunate impost having been placed upon tillage only, was rendered particularly obnoxious from the circumstance of its falling exclusively upon the poorest class of farmers — a class who were driven by necessity alone, as has been already shown, to turn their untaxed and profitable pasture into a reluctant, an unprofitable, and titheable tillage. And however light the pecuniary amount may appear when spread over the whole country, upon an average by the acre, and compared in that shape with the average amount in England, it was, in reality, levied at a very exorbitant rate in some parts of Ireland; and there is the most obvious fallacy in including in the average the pasture (which paid nothing), to lessen the apparent burthen upon the

arable, which paid all, as the existence of the burthen on the arable was the source of the very grievance and discouragement complained of.

It has been remarked by Mr. Curwen in his agricultural tour through Ireland in 1813, and by other competent judges, that the tithe was higher, in proportion to the value of the crop, in Ireland, than in England;* but when, moreover, the unpopularity of the tax on other grounds, and the dishonest partiality, and uncontrolled power, and license of the tithe proctors is remembered,—so totally different in its practical operation from anything ever seen in England,—it will be admitted that the existence of tithe, in its Irish shape, must have acted with very peculiar force as an obstacle and a discouragement to the cultivation of the soil, and must have contributed much to prevent the more substantial farmers from embarking in it at all.

The export of corn has been much increased and facilitated by the removal of the restrictions on navigation, which subsisted till 1821, between England and Ireland, and by putting the trade on the footing of a coasting trade.

The great facilities which have been afforded by steam navigation to rapid transit, have not been favourable to the increase of tillage *as yet*, for corn is not generally carried by steam vessels; in some respects it is stated, in the course of the Poor Inquiry, to have had a tendency to diminish the

* Curwen, Vol. i. p. 385; Vol. ii. p. 78. 253.

growth of grain, as it has enhanced the value of live stock,—and this, where artificial feeding is never practised, increases the desire of throwing land into grass. The great improvement which has occurred also in the breed of stock, has had the same tendency; but steam navigation will be highly favourable to *improved* arable farming, whenever it shall be introduced, as the farmers who learn to fatten cattle on artificial food will be able to sell their beast when the price of meat is highest. This has already been exemplified in the article of pigs, which being fed on potatoes, and being now more easily transported to their market, have assisted the profits of the small farmer more than any other improvement which can be quoted. The breed has been quite changed within a few years, and is now excellent; the increase in the export of pigs from Ireland is more striking than that of any other article of produce—and to that degree have the tillage farmers profited by steam navigation.

The recent growth of the milling trade may also be partly attributed to the same cause. It is a very valuable trade, and must increase very rapidly from the saving which is made in carriage, by exporting the manufactured article instead of the raw grain: fourteen stone of good raw oats will only produce eight stone of good oatmeal, and the meal will be of better quality, by manufacturing the oats fresh from the straw, than if the same oats were exported to England and manufactured there.

This trade is also conducted on a larger scale than in England; there are a great many mills annually erected upon an improved plan, and they are in the hands of respectable and wealthy manufacturers, who have introduced the very best machinery, so as to clean and dress the wheat in a superior manner, and as they have uniformly produced a good article, they have thereby gained a character for Irish flour in the English markets which enables it to command a ready sale. By a note to Beaufort's map of Ireland, it appears that there was only *one* flour-mill in the north of Ireland in 1792, so that the difficulty and expense of procuring flour formerly must have been of itself sufficient to prevent the consumption of wheaten bread. It has been found that the recent establishment of mills has had the greatest effect in promoting the use of flour, of which a much greater proportion is annually taken off by the home consumption; for it is not to the British market alone that the Irish farmer need look for a demand: it is invaluable to have an outlet for any superabundant quantity which may be produced, but it does not follow that the increased quantity will all be thrown on the British ports; on the contrary, if that increase is occasioned by an improvement in the system of production, it may be confidently hoped that the augmented comforts, industry, and wealth of the inferior classes, which must ensue, will necessarily excite an increasing demand in the home markets,

and a gradual employment of domestic trades, which always precedes, and eventually occasions the growth of manufactures.

It is not necessary to proceed with the flattering picture of progressive wealth and happiness which might be here imagined, for visions of this kind are daily and eloquently described in schemes for railway companies, mining companies, or other undertakings which profess to have Ireland for their object; but it has been so often the practice to *put the cart before the horse*, in devising plans for Irish improvement, that it is necessary to come down to plain matter of fact, and to point out that the principal occupation of the country is carried on with great want of skill at present, but that this defect is capable of easy amendment. Whether there is really a spirit afloat at this moment, equal to the task, time alone can show; but it behoves every Irish proprietor, who can amend the system, to do *something* towards it, and forthwith to strive to put his hand unto the plough.

The difficulties and discouragements are often very great, but the reward will be found proportionate.

The tenants may be very ignorant in the management of their farms; but perhaps we may find, if we examine ourselves in secret, that we *also* are deficient in the knowledge requisite for rightly managing estates. The management should be as various as the circumstances of each. If the

landlords will consent to make the experiment of co-operating personally with their tenants, they will find that, though they have much to *teach*, they have also much to learn, from these poor men. True philanthropy, and true wisdom, should direct them to strive to mend matters *as they are*, instead of aiming at unattainable perfection, by methods not practicable. One set of Irish enthusiasts say that tillage should be promoted, and then they foolishly add—by turning up pasture. Another set of theorists assert, that grazing should be encouraged, and forthwith add — by converting tillage into grass. Let us venture humbly to suggest, that both are right, and both are wrong. Let us hope that both will modify their views to the state of things as they are, by striving to make good tillage of what is now bad tillage, and better grazing of what is already good grazing.

The Irish landlords have been traduced by people who knew them not, or who did not estimate their duties rightly. Those among them who reside in Ireland are not less charitable, less zealous, or less amiable, than their English brethren; in many instances those qualities have been more strikingly developed, but a great many of them have laboured in a wrong direction hitherto; and a greater number still have given up the matter in despair, and have exhibited a want of judgment in the profusion of what may be called their domestic charities, which has been almost mischievous to those who relied

upon their unmerited beneficence. Their liberality ought frequently to have been extended in a different direction. Mr. Blacker's little pamphlet instructs landlords as well as farmers; and when they have both had time to profit by the instruction which it conveys, they will both learn to estimate their relative merits more highly; but time, patience, much labour, and much discretion, are required to effect these objects.

If it were possible to obtain a thorough and general co-operation of both classes, without the introduction of some new principle by the Legislature, a Poor Law might be unnecessary; but it has been found by practical men, that there are elements in the economical position of both classes in Ireland, which tend to prevent their mutual co-operation, and which it is difficult to destroy without the assistance of a well-digested Poor Law.

The magnitude of the difficulties to be encountered in digesting a proper system cannot be too highly estimated by those who are practically conversant with the actual condition of the poor in Ireland; but the more discussion is promoted on this most important subject, the greater is the probability of arriving at a correct and fortunate result.

Poor Laws.

§ I. *Introduction.—General objects to be kept in view.—Evils of Poverty should be made available to good purposes.*

THE object of the preceding pages has been to give a faint outline of the nature and state of agriculture *generally*. In a country where the great mass of the population is wholly agricultural, it is of paramount importance to ascertain how any novel economical arrangement, such as a Poor Law, will affect the rural portion of the community. And it is difficult to come to any distinct understanding upon the right means of improving the condition of the poor in Ireland, until some ideas are collected, respecting the present position of the whole agricultural class, and the possible profits of their occupation.

The remaining space will be taken up in considering the effect, which the Poor Law proposed for Ireland by Her Majesty's Government may possibly be made to produce, upon the condition of the rural population, and how it will act upon this peculiar state of agriculture: an attempt will also be made to indicate what *sort* of stimulus that

measure should supply to the profitable employment of labour in all parts of the country—particularly in the very poorest districts.

For it appears that indistinct views are sometimes entertained, as to the peculiar province of a well-digested Poor Law, and as to the particular description of influence which it ought to exert. It is necessary, therefore, to make a few preliminary and general remarks, in order to explain the method by which a Poor Law may be made to operate beneficially upon the imperfections which may be found in Ireland. So that without being in itself a panacea for existing evils, it may yet be made to promote the application of those specific remedies which the best-informed observers consider alone calculated to effect a permanent cure.

Thus it is asserted that all gratuitous relief to the able-bodied is a positive injury to society; and the man who asserts this in Ireland, is obliged to put his hand in his pocket the next moment, to give a starving but able-bodied beggar sixpence, because he cannot get work:—let it be admitted that this *is* a very great evil, and let us inquire whether the proposed Poor Law can be made to open men's eyes to its effects, practically as well as theoretically; and whether it will enable them to relinquish the practice of gratuitous relief, and make them afford a better sort of assistance to the poor, by inducing them to show the able-bodied how they can relieve themselves.

Again, it is said that the poor in towns are brought to destitution by intemperance and by combination, and that we ought to enact laws against these admitted evils: let us inquire whether the proposed Poor Law will not rouse the public attention more actively to these points, and whether the well-intentioned persons who suggest temperance societies,—who exclaim in vain against the defects of the licensing system and against combination—will not soon find in all householders, who will be all rate-payers, a much larger class of willing auditors and zealous co-operators, than they have hitherto been able to collect.

Lastly, it may be asserted, that famines are brought on in the west of Ireland by the evils of tenancy in copartnership; that in every part of Ireland the farmers are poor, and do not give work, because their system of agriculture is defective;—that a Poor Law of itself will not cure these evils; and that, if farmers are taxed for the support of the poor before their means of paying that tax are improved, they will become more thoroughly depressed than ever. These are very material objections, and must, therefore, be discussed at some length: — let us admit that farmers, as well as labourers, in Ireland are sadly depressed already, and that they *are* unable to bear any new burthen; but let us inquire into some of the details of the system by which they carry on their business, and see whether the effect of the Poor Law, if carried out

on the principles of the English Bill, will, practically speaking, impose any new burthen upon the farmers.

Some people who expatiate very largely upon such subjects are not equally conversant with these details, and are apt to lose themselves in a labyrinth of reasoning about small farms, and conacres, and agricultural capital, and matters with which they are perhaps not practically familiar; while others, who know all these details, are not equally well acquainted with the practical working of the English Poor Law. It is essential that the actual condition of the Irish farmer should be viewed with reference to the real principles of the English Poor Law, and that it should be ascertained, whether those principles, carried out to their full extent, will so operate, as—without violent interference with his present condition—to induce him to improve it, — not *by means* of the enactments themselves, for that is impossible; — but *by supplying a new agency and a new motive*, whereby he will be led *to work out for himself an amelioration of his own condition.*

In order to ascertain what is the nature and extent of the means at his disposal in different districts, it will be necessary to endeavour to sketch out the state of the very poorest parts of Ireland where famine prevails, and to point out how the Poor Law might possibly bring the inhabitants to introduce some essential improvements in their

condition, so as to make it resemble that which is found in the less suffering portions of the country : and next, some reference must be attempted to the particular description of poverty which exists in the counties removed *above* the risk of periodical famine. So that we may see by what means such districts may be improved likewise, and by what gradations each state of society may be enabled to raise itself one step in the social scale. The state of the population in great towns, and even in the richer agricultural districts, bears so great a resemblance to that of other countries, that it is not equally necessary to describe it particularly at present. The interests of the richer parts of Ireland are so materially affected by the constant incursions of paupers from the poorer, that it is sufficient to notice, that the former would reap a double benefit by a *successful* introduction of a Poor Law into Ireland ; for they would be relieved, not only by the amended habits of their *own* poor, but by escaping the burthen of the mendicants from the poorer counties.

Before, however, we can enter usefully upon these details, (which will presently follow,) we must pause for a moment, in order to point out the danger of adopting any erroneous general views respecting the real origin of the poverty which is found among the labouring classes in Ireland.

We are so prone to imagine that it requires some new or startling principle to obtain a striking

result, and the poverty of Ireland is known to be so great and so extensive, that it is difficult to believe that an apparently trifling remedy, acting very generally, will be sufficient, if free scope be given to it, to restore a healthy vigour to the social system, and bring about all that is desired.

The English have long since discovered in their own case, that the only sure road to wealth is, not to disturb industry, but to leave it to itself. Instead, however, of applying this rule to others, they sometimes forget it. And one is always afraid lest their desire to realize British ideas of perfection in Ireland *at once*, will induce the adoption of some well-intended *short cut* towards wealth and comfort, which will really hinder the attainment of the goodly end proposed.

Some confusion has, perhaps, arisen in distinguishing between the causes and the effects of Irish poverty. Thus we find it commonly asserted that the great poverty of the agricultural classes in Ireland proceeds from three causes :—

1. The payment of wages in kind, (in *conacres*,) instead of in money.
2. The prevalence of small farms.
3. The tenacious adherence of the peasantry to their land.

Now it may appear paradoxical to combat this assertion; but, nevertheless, it is worth while to inquire at the outset, whether these three things, which, abstractedly speaking, may be very bad, are

not the effects, instead of being the causes of the poverty of Ireland ; and what action the Poor Law will bring to bear upon them.

The Poor Law is understood to be exceedingly unpopular in the rural districts of Ireland at the present moment, because it is erroneously supposed that it must of necessity be opposed in its working to a state of things which is there generally believed to be irremediable ; and although the public are not philosophers, they understand full well that any tampering with the free and natural current of affairs, brings nothing but misery in its train. Most fortunately the Poor Law at present proposed, if administered on the same principles as have worked so well in England, will not directly oppose itself to the existing current of things. On the contrary, it will enable the people to make use of the advantages which may be found, even in things which are supposed to be abstractedly bad ; for, in truth, it is easy to extract good out of these three prevailing evils.

1st. Then as to the payment of wages in acres instead of in money,—it is fortunate that the labourers are ready to accept of this sort of payment ; because, though the Poor Law will make it the interest of farmers to employ the poor, for profit, it cannot at once provide them with the means of paying their wages in money. It is fortunate, therefore, that the labourers are willing and happy to accept of the only species of remuneration

which their employers can at present afford to give; and when farmers find their profit in the additional employment which they thus promote, they will gradually (as will presently be shown) come to money payments. They cannot pay in money till labour is more profitable to the employers than it is at present: but it is *not* profitable at present, only *because* they have never yet turned their attention sufficiently to the means by which it may be *made* so. These means cannot be devised in a day: and the rate of wages cannot experience any permanent or useful rise, till the farmers and labourers themselves are induced to enter upon the discovery of the means of raising it. Any attempt to force up the rate of wages prematurely will be prejudicial to the community, and will fail in its intention. But the Reformers of the Poor Law in England have always discouraged the idea that wages could be forced up by any part of its machinery, without a previous or accompanying rise in profits.

2ndly. It is fortunate that the farms are small, because the capitals engaged in farming are very small. The advantages attending large farms are not abstractedly important; on the contrary, every agriculturist knows that there are many positive disadvantages attending them: crops must be brought in from a greater distance, the manure must be carried out further, &c. &c. But the great advantage of large farms is, that they concentrate

capital, and the energy and skill with which it can be employed. Now the capitals engaged in farming in Ireland, being small, can be much more easily concentrated in small farms: when capital is so concentrated, and expended on labour, it will increase; and, when increased, *then* farms will be made larger.

The Poor Law, when administered properly, will not encourage or discourage small farms or large farms, but will discourage the displacement of farming capital by violent means. It will show landlords that it is not for their interest to displace tenants already in possession, except for non-payment of rent; and it will show them that it is for their interest to demand a fair amount of rent: —they will also instruct their tenants in the best way of making agricultural profits—lest the dispossession of tenants, even for non-payment of rent, should create a risk of their ultimate destitution. Large farms do not necessarily tend to perpetuate and increase large farms; for Irish farms were once large, and have gradually become small farms; and if they were all violently increased to-morrow, and if the same causes for the diminution of agricultural capital, which have been already adverted to, were still left at work, they would all gradually diminish, as now: what is wanted is the introduction of a new principle, by which individual capital will be less interfered with

than hitherto. The Poor Law, when rightly introduced into Ireland, will serve in the mildest manner to counteract and discourage any violent interference with capital.

3rdly. It is fortunate that the tenacious adherence to land exists in Ireland, because, if well directed, it will induce the peasantry to make such exertions and undergo such privations as the low rate of wages of the present day is insufficient to stimulate, but which are absolutely required in order that they may emerge from their present state of poverty. Were the standard of labouring skill and of wages higher than at present, the same tenacity might be injurious: but as it is only by raising wages that it can be effectually diminished, so it is undesirable that it should be lessened *until* the rate of wages is increased. When wages shall be as high as in the other parts of the United Kingdom, there is no reason to suppose that the tenantry will be more attached to land as a means of existence than to any other method of obtaining a livelihood by industry.

Besides, it is perfectly well known in Ireland, that if the tenantry were suddenly to relax, either in their attachment to, or in their competition for land, the landlord would turn their small arable farms into grazing, which, of all known modes of employing capital advantageously, is the one in which the smallest ingredient of labour is required

to form a profit; so that, until some other demand for labour has been created, the community must suffer immediately, if any principle having a tendency to throw land into grass should be extensively developed.

The great object of the promoters of a Poor Law should be, *not to attempt to do too much with it.* Before the small farmers can be induced to give up their diminutive occupations, labour at tolerable wages must be provided for them; before good wages can be paid, the men must be taught to earn them. The fact is constantly overlooked, that men who are accustomed to receive but eightpence for a day's work, are not able to do much more than eightpence worth of work. Sometimes it is their skill, sometimes it is their habits, sometimes it is their bodily strength, which is deficient, and which disqualifies them from giving such labour as will require a higher rate of wages; and although it is easy, by instruction, attention, and wholesome food, to amend all this *gradually*, it is found, practically, that a native will be more successful than a stranger in effecting this amendment. There are plenty of Irish grazing-farms with the finest soil, where English farmers might employ their capital and skill in tillage, without the slightest danger of being interrupted by Captain Rock: but they know that the employment of Connaught labourers at sixpence or eightpence a day, which is the rate of wages constantly quoted, would not

remunerate a capitalist; so that there can be no well-founded hope of introducing foreign capital, except by way of mortgage or loan.

The promoters of a Poor Law should admit that a population can only be depauperized with certainty, by inducing them to depauperize themselves. People brought up to a particular mode of employment, however faulty it may be, cannot change their occupation or even relinquish their erroneous ideas abruptly, and can only be effectually improved by gentle advances towards amendment. They can only be enriched by slow gradations. But each step towards improvement, though it may appear trifling to the indifferent observer at a distance, is valued most sensibly by the individual who makes it. And it is the aggregate of these apparently trifling steps which constitutes the sum of the happiness of the community.

§ II. *Inquiry as to the facility of obtaining profitable Employment for the Able-bodied.—Sketch of the Agricultural Condition of the extreme West.—Doubtful success of Emigration.—Improvements practicable.*

LET us now advert again to the details of those local circumstances already alluded to. And first let us look into the agricultural condition of the population in Galway, Mayo, Donegal, and generally of those most impoverished districts which extend along the more remote and inaccessible portion of

the West of Ireland, and from whence issue that crowd of harvest-men, who spread themselves over the remainder of the kingdom.

Everybody admits, that there are at present a vast number of industrious able-bodied persons reduced to mendicancy during a portion of the year in those particular parts of Ireland ; but it is said that all they want is work. Let us proceed to consider the great collateral advantage of the Poor Law, and the ease with which this work may be discovered for them, as soon as it is made the interest of the rate-payers to get rid of the burthen of supporting paupers unprofitably, when they will begin to think about putting them in the way of supporting themselves.

The relief of the *impotent* poor need not be particularly discussed. After some diversity of opinion and debate, it seems now pretty generally admitted, that it is just and necessary, that districts should be enabled to tax themselves for the support of the destitute, through age, disease, or infirmity ; and that as the tax of alms has hitherto been raised very unequally, it is fitting that an attempt should be made to throw the burthen (as the new Poor Law endeavours to do) more equally over the property of the district. That this in itself will be a very great measure of relief to the small farmers, who have hitherto borne an unequally large share of the burthen, nobody who knows their condition, and the extent of the tax they have had to pay, can doubt

for a moment; nor can it be doubted that it will lead to the very greatest improvement in their habits as well as in their means. This part of the subject has been usually overlooked of late, as the question regarding the relief of the able-bodied is considered of so much more vital consequence; and those who are alarmed at the relief of able-bodied paupers assert, the poverty of the population is so extensive, and that the new charge which will be imposed upon the industrious by *that* branch of the measure will be so heavy that it will very much overbalance the advantage they will experience from the diminution of the other burthen.

Let us now see if there is not a leading cause, and also a leading remedy, for the poverty which always pervades and for the famine which occasionally desolates those districts. The details of these matters are as little known to the inhabitants of Leinster, and the richer parts of Ireland, as they are to the inhabitants of Kent or Middlesex.

It is impossible to give a minutely accurate portrait of the existing state of society in the western districts, nor will it be here attempted; a very faint outline of some of the most prominent deformities of the present system will be sufficient to show the impossibility of doing so: there are many counter-balancing advantages, and some aggravating circumstances also, which there is not space to estimate here. It may perhaps appear uninteresting to go into a detail of such purely local matters; nevertheless

less, they form the pith and marrow of the whole question: for if there is any part of the island to which, from local circumstances, the Poor Law shall prove to be inapplicable, one single failure will ultimately destroy the whole fabric; and certainly, if the Poor Law succeeds in these regions pre-eminent for their poverty, it may be safely pronounced practicable in all the rest of the country.

In these western districts the persons who occupy land independently, form a much larger proportion of the population than elsewhere; there are much fewer cottiers who depend solely upon their labour for support, than in the richer counties; and the landlords not having any great inducement (as will presently be seen) for turning them out, they are generally in a state of complete tranquillity. Politics, which are commonly said to be the bane of Ireland, do not enter into their heads; they are not qualified to reason accurately upon the abstract causes of their poverty: nevertheless, the great majority of the inhabitants are in a condition of more abject and more hopeless penury than can be conceived by anybody who has not been compelled to go among them in a year of scarcity.

A visit to these districts impresses the mind with a degree of sadness and gloom which it requires much exertion to throw off; and to one who does not attempt to seek out the simple cause of this state of things, it appears as hopeless of amendment as it is unparalleled in extent. It may be added

also, that the landlords as a body are, speaking generally, very needy; the smallness of their fortunes, and the disproportion between their acres and their incomes, is the theme of constant joke throughout the rest of Ireland; so that those who talk of obliging them to undertake the sole burden of the improvements required, must be unacquainted with the extent of their means. To return, however, to the farms in these districts, the custom has existed from time immemorial to let the land in co-partnership; and the tenants till it "*in Co.*" as it is called in the West, or in *run-dales*, as it is called in Donegal. This had its origin, of course, in the poverty of the original settlers, and in the original intention of occupying it only for grazing, for by this means they were saved the expense of fencing; and while the population was thin, and when single capitals were insufficient to stock a considerable space, it was the best plan that could be adopted; but from the total absence of any artificial organization, by which they could of themselves remedy the inconvenience of this arrangement as society changed, and as the evils gradually developed themselves, they have been brought at last to a situation which must be almost incredible to those who have not actually seen many miles of country occupied in this manner.

If patience will permit, it is worth while to describe the effect of holding in partnership, combined with constant subdivision, by supposing the history

of some single townland ; premising that, in explaining the different periods in the history of one, we show the state which some of the innumerable varieties of the system assume on different farms in the same district at the present day. It is not to be supposed that *all* are at present equally subdivided, or that the inconvenience of joint-tenancy is felt alike in all : in some few we find joint-tenancy a convenient, though an injudicious arrangement ; in most it is merely a very inconvenient arrangement ; while in some it amounts to the certainty of periodical destitution and of actual famine.

In the first generation then, let us suppose that A, B, and C, occupy in common a townland, consisting of a hundred and forty-seven acres. In this generation the occupants are possessed of forty-nine acres each, and may be supposed to make their rents by grazing, cultivating only a small portion of the surface for their immediate use ; and, as they are very poor, this is done in the most slovenly manner : they depend a good deal on oatmeal for subsistence, and they agree to break (or plough) nine acres. Their "*stint*" (or agreed number) of cattle running in common ; each man tills within the common fence ; but the cattle are let in as soon as the crops are off the ground, so that a succession of clover, or turnips, cannot be thought of, as the cattle of each would have an equal right to trespass upon the crop. But A, being rather more

industrious than B, and C, wishes to extend his tillage ; *that* the others resist, as it will encroach on the subsistence of their cattle : again he manures his three acres a little, and finds it is in better heart than that of his neighbours, and will give him three crops of oats ; but they, not having manured theirs, exhaust their land with two crops, and then they insist upon shifting the tillage to another part of the common farm : so A is unable to take advantage of his manure, and never attempts that improvement again. The three occupiers “in Co.” agree together pretty well, however ; they shift their tillage every now and then over a space of about forty-five acres, the remainder being too remote from their cluster of dwellings, and no road of communication for their common passage, or for the access of sand, sea-weed, or lime.

But, in the next generation, we will suppose that A has left six sons and two daughters ; and having never been able to acquire anything for them by his industry,—which he was never allowed to exercise,—he is obliged at his death to divide his ground among them. Each of the sons gets seven acres, and each of the sons-in-law three acres and a half ; but it is not divided off to each, so that each of the sons cultivates a seventh of a third of the nine acres, and each of the sons-in-law cultivates the half of the seventh of a third of nine acres ; and this shifts about alternately over a space of forty-five acres, the parties quarrelling

together every year about the choice of their bit of tillage. If B and C have had small families, an intestine broil ensues, for the tillage suited to one party is quite unsuited to the others ; and, after quarrelling for many years, they come to some sort of imperfect partition. But if, as is more usually the case, B and C have also had large families, they mutually agree to change the description of tillage a little : they depend more upon potatoes, and less upon oats ; and do not shift their tillage so often over the forty-five acres, and give the ground more manure. But still no man has an interest in giving more manure than his neighbours ; and when this does not yield them food enough, they at length are obliged to break two more patches of ground, which they contrive to make arable, and each of A's sons cultivates, in addition to the former tillage, the seventh of a third of the new patches ; — by this they contrive to live. But in the third generation the same cause for subdivision has still continued ; and if one of the sons of A has had seven sons, each of these grandsons can get but one acre : it might be thought that such a scanty provision was insufficient enough, even when farmed in the very best way ; but it is impossible that they should farm it well, and, what is worse, they are not able to till the half of it. They still cultivate the same patches, and each of these grandsons tills the seventh of the seventh, of a third of forty-five acres, and the seventh of the seventh, of a third of each

of the new patches, which may possibly be placed on the opposite sides of the hill.

This description, however tedious, and apparently trifling, cannot be charged with the slightest exaggeration or embroidery, for examples of it are constantly seen ; and a description of some of its effects may be found by referring to the agricultural evidence of the Irish Poor Inquiry Commission, Appendix F. barony of Murrisk, county of Mayo. It will hardly be believed, that they do not themselves know the precise size of their holdings, which have never been properly surveyed ; and they inherit their promised share or half share of the paternal farm, by halves, or thirds, or sixths, as the case may be,—be the acreage more or less. It is needless to say, that a family cannot subsist upon such a diminutive portion of land ; consequently they take to fishing, to collecting kelp, &c. ; but these being very precarious occupations, especially in the rude and imperfect way in which they are followed, they are still obliged to cling to their little inheritance with as great tenacity as ever. Any sort of industry which they can exercise independently, they are ready to engage in ; but to hire themselves as labourers is impossible, as most of the other farms in the neighbourhood are occupied in the same way ; and those farmers who have most ground, have little inducement to exert themselves, and less to employ labourers : so that the whole population, though anxious for work, become

quite unused to the systematic exercise of labour. Their time is occupied in interminable disputes about their respective rights; in running to the magistrates, who may reside perhaps ten miles from the scene; and their trivial earnings are expended in costs for summonses, surveyors' fees, and actions for trespass.

Besides all this, each and every individual is liable for the rent of the whole farm; and though it must be admitted that most agents are ready to divide the rent proportionately, and to open a separate account with each small holder, they imagine that *their* duty stops there, and that the tenants ought to agree among themselves to divide their tillage. Instances were by no means wanting, however, even at the period of the Poor Inquiry in 1835, where the agents still neglected to take that trouble, and still insisted upon getting the rent in a lump sum, or distraining the farm generally; so that even where the bailiff is most anxious to act fairly by each individual, it is impossible but that the richer or more industrious of the common tenants should be made to suffer occasionally for the indolence or dishonesty of his co-partners,—which constitutes another effectual check to improvement.

It must be obvious now, as was stated above, that the landlord has no power, practically, of substituting a good tenant for a bad one, to till the half of a seventh, of a third of several detached patches of land, occupied by cousins and friends.

It is equally impossible also for him to check the subdivision, for it occurs by the mutual agreement of the inhabitants within the common fence, and without the slightest possibility of the landlord's becoming acquainted with it; so that the population augments with a rapidity truly frightful, and he dismisses a painful subject from his mind by leaving the country.

It is unnecessary to attempt to unravel any further the tangled web of misery, petty litigation, and indolence, which such a system perpetuates. To an unaccustomed eye, the only wonder is, how the people can possibly manage to exist at all under such a system; but the difficulties which occur in changing it, have hitherto always appeared more insuperable than its continuance. The tenants frequently assemble, and endeavour to come to a partition; but the interests of each are differently involved in the transaction, according to the quantity of ground which each holds.

Those who hold enough ground, and to whom therefore the immediate necessity for change is not apparent, appeal to *the wisdom of their ancestors* ;* while those who have not enough, still fear that the others will take advantage of them; and even when they are most sincerely anxious for a division, they are sometimes really unable to afford the expense of removing their cabin to the

* A fact.

opposite side of the hill, to which there is no road, and to pay for provision during the first year of their change before their new acre is thoroughly reclaimed. Each wishes to get the arable land, which is invariably near the cluster of houses, and is regardless of the unimproved land at a distance ; and if they succeed in dividing by common consent, it is usually found that each man gets his share (whether that share is ten or two acres) in several different places, scattered up and down, according to the quality of the soil, in different parts of the farm : and though such an imperfect change is a great improvement as compared with the former state of things, because he is able to fence and till each part as he pleases ; yet to *him*, a consolidation of his farm would be of infinitely greater advantage, than any lessons which could be inculcated in green crops or in house-feeding.

In many cases the landlord has directed the tenants to come to a partition ; but the latter, not being able to bear the expense of removing their houses and making new fences, have opposed his authority ; or they have imagined that he had some secret design of his own, that he would never trouble himself to allot roods or half acres to poor fellows who had no other resource ; or he may have openly said, that he thought no man ought to have less than four acres, and the others ought to find labour elsewhere, which *they* know too well is not to be had ; or that they ought to emigrate, which they

are quite unsuited to, having large families, and not being accustomed to hard work: so they have resisted the whole scheme strenuously. Again, in many cases, before a successful partition can be effected, some of the tenants must be located at a considerable distance, and fresh land must be brought into cultivation, to which it is absolutely necessary to make roads, for access to sea-weed, lime-quarries, &c.; but this is usually beyond the power of an individual landlord, and the road-laws at present are not effective for this purpose. The censure and the praise bestowed on the Grand Jury (or road) laws, has been alike exaggerated; but it must be admitted by all parties, that they have been inoperative for good in many populous townlands in which, or near which, no new road has been made or repaired since the institution of the Grand Jury laws, and where nevertheless an increasing cess has been annually raised for the advantage of other neighbourhoods. This grievance is of course most particularly remarkable in those isolated and almost forgotten districts of the country where there are no gentry, where the agents as well as the landlords are non-residents, and where there is at the same time the thickest population, and the most abject misery.

It is clear that in a country such as has been just described,—where no motive exists which has hitherto been found strong enough to bring the people to co-operate among themselves, or the landlords

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to co-operate with their tenants, or with one another,—where the interest of each is at present at variance with that of his neighbour,—the greatest blessing which could possibly be devised, would be any system by which these great masses of population could be organized in such a way, as would admit of their employing their waste time and their common energies in useful concert.

Those who say that emigration is necessary from districts so circumstanced, where literally *everything* still remains to be done—where there are no good houses—no fences—no good cultivation—no roads—no woods planted on the steeps—and no drains made in the hollows; where there is much land fit to be reclaimed, and much material by which the reclaiming can be effected; must either underrate the expense of emigration very much, and the number of emigrants who must be sent off; or they must overrate the expense of putting the social machine into healthy motion.

The promoters of emigration maintain that we ought to turn the land into grass, and transport the surplus population to some other country. But at whose expense? It certainly would be a vast advantage to the emigrants themselves, provided they were well selected; but for that purpose they ought to be the strongest and most enterprising of the community: and would the departure of *these*, leaving the weaker behind, be equally advantageous to the country? If the state consents to defray the

cost of emigration, it will be readily and voluntarily adopted by the young and the enterprising. If they oblige any class to defray the expense against their will, they will commit the grossest injustice: but if they tell the districts that they may tax themselves for the purpose, (which the Irish Poor Law Bill permits,) one or two experiments will immediately prove to them, not only that it will be easier and better to improve cultivation at home, than to send away the best blood and sinews of the community, but it will prove also,—which is a question of practical arithmetic,—that it is *cheaper* likewise. This most convincing of all arguments need not be here enforced—it is founded upon the experience of facts; but can only be satisfactorily proved to the parties themselves, by giving them the power to make the experiment on the spot: and as there may be many exceptions* in which it may possibly be advantageous, the proposition to give the power is very useful.

Moreover, it is to be feared that extrinsic capital cannot be easily or advantageously introduced into these districts in their present state; but if a proper organization is established, they will create capital within themselves; and when once it is understood that money is wanted, not for dissipation, but for profitable employment, capitalists will lend to landlords, and landlords will lend to tenants, as much as

* Such as female orphans, or young widows, who have no prospect of leaving the workhouse in any other way.

is required to commence the more obvious improvements.

The unparalleled extent of human misery which exists in the western districts is derived mainly from the system of joint-tenancy above described : other systems are bad, but this is of all the worst ; for it creates not only misery, but actual famine. Those who fancy that written laws are omnipotent, would probably recommend a short cut in legislation, and would prohibit joint-tenancy by enactment at once ; but that would be very unjust as well as impolitic, for under some circumstances of capital and land it is advantageous : or they would discourage it by taxation, which would be very oppressive, for the same reasons.

Let us inquire whether the whole system will not gradually melt away of itself, before the mild influence of a Poor Law administered on the same principles as that of England. Let it be remembered, that a Poor Law providing relief for the able-bodied, however well regulated the system of relief may be, *must* have an immediate practical effect in these districts. During eight months of the year the able-bodied population will not require relief; but, during the remaining four, a certain proportion of their number will gradually begin to apply for admission into the workhouse, not from indolence or dissipation only, but because their annual stock of potatoes is exhausted, and because they can get no work. The occupier

of three or four acres must always be poor, but he is not destitute; the occupier of one acre "held in Co." when he is not strong enough to travel for work, is necessarily destitute during a month or two, and, when he is so, he can have no earthly resource but to "take his bag on his back," and become a beggar. It is to that last extremity that they are annually reduced in great numbers, and periodically (when the crop has failed) in crowds. The only difference will be, that instead of travelling far a-field, raising a tax in kind upon those who are but one degree removed from destitution themselves, they will enter the workhouse, (where their support will be defrayed in equal proportion, by farmer and landlord,) and they will be obliged to submit to irksome regulations, which, if their destitution has been occasioned by improvidence, will be a check upon its repetition: but this, which will be a very great improvement, is not all.

The great advantage of the new system is, that the pauper *will receive relief from the district to which he belongs*; for, in truth, every district of tolerable size can give an industrious, able-bodied man an opportunity of working profitably for himself, if a proper organization is given to it to develop its powers; and, if the persons taxed for the relief of the pauper are the persons who can really enable him to find profitable employment, it must be presumed they will do so. But care must be taken *at the same time*, to stimulate

the man's own exertions, by workhouse restraint, or some such sufficient test, so that both parties should feel a common interest in the matter. The parties seeking relief, and the parties taxed to afford relief, should be mutually impelled by different motives, acting at the same time, to seek out a source of profitable employment. Is it not clear, for example, that if one of the joint-tenancies above described were considered a little union, and were equally taxed to support its own destitute, they would never have continued to occupy their land in such a ruinous manner? The cogent bond of their common interest would have formed a motive of action, before which all smaller difficulties in arranging the terms of agreement would have vanished, as soon as there appeared a probability that a continuance of the old system of joint-tenancy would reduce some of the co-partners to destitution; for the richest and largest holders, as they would pay the largest share towards the new tax, would have been as anxious as they have hitherto been backward, in consenting to the division; and the poorer and smaller occupiers, who could least afford any additional charge, would have been equally zealous on that account.

But *hitherto the joint-tenancy has always escaped* the burthen of supporting their own destitute, and any of the co-partners who are reduced to destitution, go to raise alms elsewhere. It is quite notorious that the mendicants in Ireland *always go out*

of the district; and that, when they levy the tax of alms, *it is done unequally*: so that the rich, who have the greatest influence in the employment of the able-bodied, have not a proportionate interest in relieving themselves from the tax which the unprofitable existence of the latter occasions. If the landlords, or the state, or any other body with sufficient power, had been compelled to provide for the destitute, they would also have found means to dissolve such a system, as soon as it threatened to lead to destitution: but it is contended, that neither the landlord nor the state could do it as effectually as the tenants; for if it was found to be the sole duty of the landlord,—even though it should be evidently for the good of the tenants likewise,—they would contrive to shut their eyes to the fact, and would try to get as much as possible out of the landlord before they consented, and more, perhaps, than he could really afford; and it would be all difficulty and counteraction:—and this is precisely what has sometimes occurred, when landlords have taken the initiative, from good motives, which were mistaken or undervalued by the people. On the other hand, as it will also be for the advantage of the landlord in the end, that any system which prevents the exercise of labour should be altered,—and as some expenses are to be borne, and as he has necessarily so much more influence and authority, (where the tenants and he feel that their interests are identical,)—it is most important

that he should be brought to understand his own interest too, and that he should be induced to take his share of the good work.

It may here be said by objectors, that, practically speaking, it is doubtful whether the evil has not already gone too far ; and whether it is not now too late to introduce regulations which, abstractedly good, from having been delayed too long, are now inapplicable. The extreme poverty of the population on the Western coast is certainly not to be believed unless it is seen ; but, nevertheless, their situation is not so desperate as is sometimes described : there is no joint-tenancy which has not some grazing, bog, mountain, or other outlet, actually attached to it,—on which, if some of the tenants were once placed, they would not be most essentially relieved. But the common rights of the whole tenantry will prevent this, until they all have become equally anxious for a partition. What is thus true of a joint-tenancy, is more true of a whole estate, which would be incalculably benefited in the aggregate by an improved arrangement, and is still more true of a union of estates ; for it is singular to remark, that these extensive districts, and each of these undivided farms, are precisely in an analogous position ; large tracts of thinly-peopled grazing, and moor,* and bog,

* A notice might easily be added here, of the facility with which large tracts may be reclaimed by a very trifling outlay, with the aid of the small capitals of the peasantry—but that it is better to refer generally to the instructive little books of Messrs. Blacker and Kennedy on that subject.

are intermingled with tracts of thickly-peopled town-lands: all that is wanted, both in the joint-tenancies and in the whole unions, is organization.

Let us now proceed to inquire what will probably be the course pursued, if the principles of the English Poor Law Bill be practically adopted in Ireland.

In the first place, then, let us assume, for the present, that the combined attention of the Boards of Guardians, and of the Central Commissioners, is able to devise a system of regulation, and discipline, and labour in the workhouse, which (notwithstanding the comparatively good diet which is offered) will effectually dissuade able-bodied persons, who can maintain themselves elsewhere, from seeking admission within its walls; and that the paupers who may be obliged to enter the house when their stock of potatoes is exhausted, will leave it as soon as they can possibly obtain an independent livelihood. The number of these claimants during the summer months may possibly be considerable at first, as these districts have hitherto been relieved from a great proportion of their able-bodied paupers by the migration of the population as mendicants: a majority of the paupers wander *far away* from these districts, *and the poor from the richer counties never enter them*. So, as the rate-payers will be suddenly called upon to bear an unaccustomed burthen, they will certainly require the particular care and assistance of the central autho-

rity. But when the guardians inquire from whence each individual applicant comes, they will, in nine cases out of ten, find that he comes from some over-peopled copartnership; and when they perceive that they and their constituents have to bear a tax for the support of these poor people, a light will break in upon the evils of joint-tenancy, which they had hitherto striven to exclude from their minds.

The landlords will next be written to; they will be told of the starving situation of certain town-lands—naming them,—and they will be informed of the expense which the system of joint-tenancy entails on them, as equal sharers in the burthens of the union. There will be no longer any difficulty in ascertaining which town-land is worst—the rent-book will no longer be their only guide; but (having got an effectual test in the workhouse, of the *bona fide* destitution of their dependants,) when the landlords wish to remedy it they will no longer go upon any abstract theory of agriculture, but they will direct their steps forthwith to those particular town-lands where the scarcity of food, as tested by workhouse relief, has proved greatest. Hitherto they have always been looked upon with distrust by their tenants when they have attempted any useful interference with the arrangements of the latter, and it has required years of constant residence to inspire confidence; but when it is obviously the interest of all parties to understand one another,—when the

motive of the landlord cannot be misunderstood,—when the tenants feel that it is no longer his interest to drive them to destitution, but, on the contrary, his direct pecuniary interest to raise them above it,—ten years will be gained in one day, and one of the chief difficulties will have been overcome.

It is unnecessary to say, however, that the good work will be gradual ; some town-lands will be more easily and quickly managed than others, and some landlords will be inattentive ; but as different estates will be included in the same union, the neighbouring landlords will do their best to stimulate the absentee, to exhort and act as arbitrator for his tenants, and to facilitate the partition by every means in their power.

As the difficulties which attend the dissolution of extensive copartnerships in land are gradually overcome by these united exertions, the more industrious tenants, when each gets the sole control over his own holding, though he has no ready money, will speedily collect more manure, and will then be enabled to let off a portion of his manured ground for conacre (or potato-ground) to those who before were reduced, from want of it, to go into the workhouse, and will *make money* from the labour of the latter which he will take in exchange. For where there are no shops, no butchers, and no bakers, money is rarely wanted except to pay rent. And although theorists argue cor-

rectly about the advantage of money-wages, it is certain, that what the labourer *here* wants is potato-ground, and this is just what the farmer can give; gradually these labourers will depend more on labour and less on their diminutive holdings, and gradually, as convertible agriculture is next introduced, which will cause a demand for labour,—and as they learn to become more skilful labourers,—they will depend more upon wages and less upon conacre. The landlords too, finding that their exertions are no longer misunderstood, will encourage their tenants to employ labourers on improved cultivation, instead of striving eternally at making large farms,—and they will thereby render the resort of the able-bodied to the workhouse unnecessary; and finding that their rent-rolls improve by this useful sort of superintendence, they will leave Cheltenham and Boulogne, to busy themselves with their practical duties, instead of discussing speculative opinions. They may possibly find themselves impeded in their operations at first by the difficulties which Irish landlords experience in borrowing money, and by the insufficiency of the Grand Jury laws, and they will apply their minds to suggesting some simple improvements in certain local matters, which will tend to remove these obstructions.

§ III. Sketch of the Conacre System in other parts of the Country, and the Advantages which must be derived from it before it can be extinguished.

THAT the improvements last alluded to will follow in the train of the Poor Laws there can be little doubt ; and the means by which they may possibly be facilitated will presently be pointed out.

It may be objected, however, that though the operation of the Poor Law may force a change in the ruinous system of joint-tenancy, it will introduce a system of conacre, which is just as bad ; and thus the last state may be found worse than the first. To this it may be replied, that though the payment of labourers by conacre is a defective system, it is infinitely better to pay them by conacre than not to employ them at all ; and, as long as joint-tenancy exists, there can be no inducement to employ them, and no extra manured ground with which to repay them. So that the abolition of such a mode of tenure, even though, in the absence of money, the newly-required labour should be repaid by conacre, would still be a very material step towards improvement.

But in order that we may rightly understand the operation of the Poor Law (if well administered), let us follow up this last answer by considering, what will be its probable working in those numerous districts of Ireland where the farms are small but separate ; where the farmers from want of capital

are totally unable to pay for labour in money,—the labourers depending upon conacre for support; and where the deficiency of demand for labour (*as is supposed*) reduces a certain portion of the population every year (though not nearly *so large* a proportion as in the extreme west) to a state of complete destitution, and to actual mendicancy.

As long as the petty farmers in these districts are able to continue in possession of their little farms, they may be poor, miserably, wretchedly poor, but they are not destitute; and taking a general view of the class in the aggregate, they are, and feel themselves, quite secure from destitution: but if, from having a bad landlord, or from bad farming, they become unable to pay their rent, and are turned out of their farms, they are either immediately reduced to destitution, or, at all events, they drop immediately into the class of cottiers, or conacre men, whose support is really precarious, and who may be said to be on the verge of destitution.

The mode in which the cottiers subsist, is in no two cases precisely the same, and it would be very unfair to suppose that they are all equally uncomfortable; but in some of the very poor districts, and under poor or bad farmers, they are certainly in a very wretched state. They try to hire for the season a quantity of manured ground for potatoes, sufficient, as they calculate, to afford subsistence for their family the whole year round; they bargain

for this conacre, (as it is called,) in money, but, not having a sixpence in the world, the farmers allow them, “from charity,” to work out the rent in labour; and the nominal rent is worked out in nominal wages; a complex debtor and creditor account is kept of both, and the balance only is settled, (*if it is ever settled*) in money. Again, if the conacre crop is deficient, or if it is exhausted at the end of the year, or if the labourer has not hired sufficient conacre, some farmer with whom he is connected, wishing to assist him, lends him some meal at a nominal price; but as he is rarely able to earn a halfpenny of money, he is allowed, “from charity,” to work out the nominal (and probably exorbitant) price of the meal in nominal wages. But the work which he performs thus without heart, and without hope, is always bad work; and, being listlessly performed, is ruinous to the farmer who employs him, who is discouraged from extending such a system, or employing more labourers than are *absolutely necessary*.

But when all the poor cottier’s shifts fail in getting provision, (and they *do* constantly fail,) he is obliged, necessarily obliged, to resort to mendicancy; or, what is much more common, he sends his wife and children to beg, till his fresh crop of conacre is ripe; while he, poor fellow, continues to work up some old score, of which he is fated never to see the end; for, somehow or other, these unfortunate men, though they cannot find wages anywhere

because there is said to be no demand for labour, are nevertheless at work every fine day in the year. It must then be thoroughly understood, that while a man gets lodging and food sufficient for the whole year, even from his poor little scrap of conacre ground, he is not destitute ; but as soon as his necessities imperatively compel him to beg the assistance of the public, either for himself, or for *his family*, he *is* destitute.

The discredit attached to the state of an itinerant mendicant, is *supposed* by the public to form a sufficient test of the reality of his destitution ; and they give alms, without the slightest acquaintance with the individual, in the confidence that he must have used his utmost exertions to support himself, before he could have submitted to such a degradation as to ask for them.

But when mendicancy (which supplies both a refuge and a test to destitution) is no longer available, and when the destitute are obliged to take the refuge, and submit to the test of the work-house ; the guardians will inquire from the poor conacre man, from whom he hired his conacles. They will point out that he might have got them cheaper with some other farmer, or that he might have worked out the rent on more liberal terms with a third, or that he might have got ground better manured, and consequently a larger crop, from a fourth, either of which would have saved him from temporary destitution. They will com-

bine to deprecate extortion on the part of the farmers, because they will now see that the effects thereof will be, to impose a direct tax on themselves. Each farmer may, perhaps, try to drive as hard a bargain as ever ; but it will be the interest of all his neighbours to instruct and assist the labourer in opposing extortion or unfair dealing. The poor man will only want an asylum till his fresh crop of conacre is ripe ; and when he leaves the workhouse he will probably get some little assistance in driving better bargains for the next year.

But this is not all ; there will be another class of persons forced into the workhouse. The able-bodied *male* applicants for admission will be very few ; but the wives and children of labourers, who otherwise would go to beg, will begin to flock for admittance into the workhouse in the month of May : and this, the guardians will be instructed resolutley to refuse, unless the husbands enter the house also. The first announcement of this decision will probably shock public opinion very much, but the necessity for the regulation will readily be understood by everybody when the effect is pointed out to them. For, shortly after, it will be seen, that when the able-bodied men are brought into the workhouse, the farmers will immediately manage to hire them again, and bring them out, and make some bargain with them in their own way, which will enable the man to support both himself

and his family ; for the *work* is absolutely required,—the only difference is, about the mode of paying for it. It will soon be seen that there are some farmers in Ireland, as in England, who, without knowing it, have been in the habit of getting their labour paid in part out of the national poor-rate. For into what else does it resolve itself ? If farmers are in the habit of letting conacles to poor cottiers, and eking that out with a loan of meal, which, taken together, only affords subsistence to the cottier's family for ten months in the year, though he works twelve months, and if the family are subsisting on alms during the other two months ;—and if the farmers, as a body, cannot in reality do without this labour, and would give a full year's subsistence rather than lose it ; what can that be considered, but getting their labour paid in part by the national poor-rate? It is evident that a farmer who gives subsistence the whole year round for the whole of his labourer's family, and pays this national poor-rate *also*, is working at a disadvantage ; and it is probable, when he is relieved from this injustice, that he who is a good master will be the first to employ more labour. And besides, the cottiers themselves will be benefited by the abolition of mendicancy, as many of them subscribe largely themselves to that national poor-rate.

But when the chairman of the Board of Guardians explains these things to the farmers, he will

not talk about money-wages, or grazing-farms, or surplus population ; he will simply point out, that they must give their cottiers more conacre, or manure it more highly ; and if the workhouse is considered as degrading as mendicancy, few farmers will like to have it publicly known, that they have reduced their cottier to resort to it ; for there is a much better spirit and more public opinion among the poor farmers, than strangers would suppose. If some of the guardians should be induced to reply to the chairman, that their farms are only of ten acres, that they have the greatest difficulty in finding potatoes for the consumption of their own house, and that they have no room for increasing their cottiers' conacre ; the chairman can immediately explain, that more manure may be easily collected by a little more attention and labour ; but that, at all events, they do not require so much potatoes now at home as formerly, as there are no longer any beggars to feed, for it so happens that *potatoes* have been the current coin in which they have paid both their labour and their poor-rate hitherto. Thus, whether labour is paid for in cash or in potatoes, and whether the poor-rate is paid voluntarily or compulsorily, it is equally found, that *some* farmers will always strive to pay as little for their labour as possible, and will get their neighbours to pay it if they can, and that the labour, when inadequately remunerated, degenerates rapidly in quality, so that, after all, it is worth less

than if it had been fairly paid ; and it will be an immediate gain to all parties, if this defect can be cured by changing the mode of pauper relief.

The improvement, however, will not stop here ; when attention is turned to the necessity of having sufficient conacres, it will induce the landlords, as well as the tenants, to turn their attention to a better style of cultivation, which will increase the abundance of manure, and thereby augment the supply of manured land ; but this of itself will diminish the rent of conacres. It is obvious that a diminution in the rent of conacres (or an increase in their fertility, which is the same thing,) is equivalent to an increase in the rate of wages ; and this change may occur, without any change in the nominal money bargain of eightpence or tenpence a-day. When the market-price of conacres is reduced, the farmers will be less disposed to apply their manure to that purpose ; and as they will get better work done by that time, they will, perhaps, have accumulated a little capital, which will enable them to pay their wages more in money, and they will apply their manure to the cultivation of turnips, which is the corner-stone of good husbandry : and this will augment the manure and the manured ground still more. A diminution in the rent of conacre ground will bring another advantage ; it will induce the farmers to prefer taking unmarried labourers into their houses, as is already frequently done ; and they will not be so eager as at present

to bring a pauper family on their farm for the sake of screwing a high conacre rent, and thereby getting their labour performed cheap. But the preference given to unmarried labourers, and the difficulties which landlords, backed by the public opinion of the rate-payers, will throw in the way of pauper establishments, will control the increase of population to a more healthy rate of progress ; and that will again act beneficially upon wages — and when wages rise, the labour will be better worth the money ; and the labourers being paid in money, will consume better food, which will create a demand for the farmer's produce.

At the first stages of this progress, the landlord will be taught by the most convincing arguments, applied to his own pocket, and by the unanimous opinions of his neighbours, — that the ejectment of his small tenants brings them immediately within the risk of destitution ; that his allowing them to farm badly tends to non-payment of rent, and to ejectment, and to destitution ; and though the pressure of the rate in any one, or two, or half-dozen isolated cases, cannot be sensibly felt by him, and therefore will not, and *ought* not to prevent him from removing an unworthy tenant ; he will adopt such a *system* as will, generally speaking, render such a course unnecessary ; he will apply his mind, therefore, not only to the improvement of agriculture, but to the improvement of that description of agriculture, which will pay his tenants best, and render them least liable to ejectment.

§ IV. *Of the Employment of Agricultural Capital on Land in Ireland.*

IT is impossible to touch upon the subject discussed in the last chapter, without adverting to some of the popular errors which have arisen respecting the employment of capital on lands in Ireland—and which have all sprung from the national indifference, both of farmers and landlords, to supplying profitable work to those immediately below them.

People who talk very glibly of the deficiency of agricultural capital in Ireland, forget that the most has never yet been made of that which *does* exist, and that there are two different modes of applying the same amount of capital to land :—one is, by expending it in labour and tillage on a given surface ; the other is, by leaving the soil to nature, and laying out the same capital upon cattle (with little or no labour) to graze a larger surface. But if the farm is too small to afford subsistence for the farmer by grazing only, and if the farmer begins to crop his ground, there are also two ways of repairing the exhaustion which ensues : one is, by additional labour in collecting manure to recruit the soil by artificial aid ; the other is, to leave the land to rest, which will, in time, accomplish the same object. If, therefore, land is plentiful and labour scarce, the community should encourage grazing, and may pay less attention to improvements in agriculture ; but when land is

limited in extent, and labour redundant, the community should not only encourage tillage, but encourage *that description* of tillage which maintains the fertility of the soil without the necessity of leaving it to idle rest. Although the best interests of the *community* are mainly concerned in this, it is very possible that an individual landlord, or an individual tenant, if he is able to make a little solitude in the midst of the community,—and if he is too indolent to employ his capital on labour, in which there is always risk,—may, and will act for his own individual advantage, contrary to the common interests of the whole society: and it is very remarkable that the tendency of agriculture in Ireland has hitherto been precisely in the direction opposed to the interest of the community—landlords have always encouraged grazing, and discouraged tillage; and tenants who were employed in tillage, have always practised that particular description of tillage by which the least labour would be required, and have depended on rest, instead of manure, for the recruiting of their land: both these facts show the evil which exists, and how it ought to be remedied; and if this prime cause of error can be removed, it may be hoped that matters will take a better course.

It is very evident that *at present*, without a Poor Law, if a landlord can turn out his arable tenants, and let his estate to graziers, he may be assured of a rent; for with the most ordinary skill in the selec-

tion of stock, the cattle must grow and yield a produce; and as no labour, worth considering, is necessary, that produce will be nearly all profit: but if the landlord lets his land to arable farmers, he must take care that they crop it in such a way as will ensure a surplus produce, over and above the support of the persons who labour the ground; for that surplus alone will yield him a rent—and if the tenants are not possessed of the requisite skill, and he will not be at the trouble to teach them, it will answer his pecuniary interests better to turn them out, (if he can do so without risk of expense or equivalent annoyance,) and let the land to a grazier: and this is precisely what the landlords are accused of now doing.

It is supposed by some people, who do not understand agricultural matters, that this process is advantageous to the landlord, *because* the capital of the grazier is greater than the capital of the arable farmers; but this is not the true reason.—The aggregate capital of all these poor men, which is thus, perhaps, wantonly destroyed, is much larger, when taken together, than the capital of the individual grazier—though, from being employed injudiciously in a bad system of tillage, it may not, perhaps, yield so great an amount of profit. There is only one period of the year at which this is apparent,—the time of harvest,—when, in addition to their stock, the dwellings which they have built, &c., all their year's produce and all their food for

the following year is stored and may be computed. During the remainder of the year, their capital is hidden in the wages which they may be said to have paid themselves for their labour; whereas the capital of the graziers, consisting solely in cattle, is always visible, and may be distrained and converted into rent at any moment, which is a great advantage to the landlord.

If then it be made the landlord's interest to look after the condition of *all* his tenants, and this a good system of Poor Laws will accomplish, he will not destroy the capital of several arable farmers by turning them out, in order to afford a profitable investment to some one grazier, unless he is sure that he cannot instruct them in a system of tillage which will yield an equal profit;—that this *can* be effected, has been exemplified by those who have made the attempt. Again, if it is his interest that they should afford full employment to the labourers under them, he will give most encouragement to those among the farmers who understand how to till and manure the whole of their ground in the best manner. Hitherto the custom among some of the best landlords has always been just the contrary, to patronize those arable farmers who gave their ground the longest intervals of rest in grass, thus employing the least amount of labour. The staple of the soil was sure to be preserved by that means, and as the grass was easily seen, the due execution of the covenant was enforced without so much difficulty; but if the whole

surface is tilled, it requires more attention to watch that each portion is manured at proper intervals.

It is obvious that proper attention on the part of the landlord will be as much to the advantage of good grazing as of good tillage. Arable farms destroyed and thrown into grass must have been stocked out of the profits of the grazier; but if he had not been given the opportunity of extending the surface of his grazing, he would have paid more attention to the improvement of his stock; and instead of spending his capital in stocking a larger farm, he would spend it in improving the breed of his cattle in his original farm; and for this some little labour would have been required of him—some drains, and ponds, and fences; but this he has not attended to hitherto. We have constantly seen small agricultural capitals destroyed, and we have also seen larger agricultural or grazing capitals spread over too wide a surface, and both under the plea that capital was deficient.

It would be tempting to pursue this topic further, and to point out, how the constant endeavour of landlords to extend the size of farms by wrong means has constantly defeated itself; but it is unnecessary for the present object to add more upon that branch of the subject. It will be sufficient again to remark, even at the risk of being accused of repetition, that the practical alternative, with respect to the size of farms in Ireland, lies usually between tillage in small farms, which

does not employ labour to the best advantage, and grazing in large farms, which does not employ labour at all. The Poor Law, it is hoped, will give us a new social element, by which it will become the direct interest of the landlord, to foster the growth of capital vested in labour, instead of capital vested in cattle. It is impossible to estimate the ultimate effect of this improvement. When the demand for labour shall thereby become general, the capital of tenants increased, and the condition of the labourer less precarious than at present, the time will *THEN* have arrived, but not *till* then, when the landlord may increase the size of his tillage-farms with advantage, in proportion to the increase of capital among his tenantry, and *then* it will be equally desirable for all parties that he should reduce those who have not accumulated any capital to the rank of labourers.

There is as ample scope for increasing the demand for labour in Ireland as in other countries; but people have always puzzled themselves about the capital required, and have neglected to make the most of the capital already existing. The agricultural operations required at present for bringing the land into a state fit for economizing labour properly, would require the best energies and the incessant toil of the whole of the present generation, even if they had nothing else to do; but each step of that process, which brings augmented wealth as its reward, will create new wants,

which the population will be called off to gratify—by new manufactures, and more labour. Perhaps it may be deemed that these observations have been sketched by too sanguine a pen ; but the object is to explain, that improvements may at least be *conceived*, which will spring from directing the energies and the interests of the people, to act in concert for their own advantage, without the assistance of any extrinsic or adventitious aids whatever ; and this impulse *can* be given, if a local organization is obtained, which will afford a fair and true representation of all the different interests concerned ; which will make the rate-payers identical with the people, and the guardians their real *bond fide* representatives ; which will make the paupers dread the workhouse, from the labour and constraint which it will impose ; and the rate-payers dread the expense of maintaining the paupers within its walls unprofitably.

Some people wish to make the workhouse labour profitable : it is difficult, if not impossible to do so, strictly speaking ; but if it could be achieved, it would be undesirable, because the rate-payers might then be indifferent, whether the able-bodied paupers entered, or remained in them. Other people suppose that good can only be effected by the imposition of a considerable tax, which seems by no means necessary—the object required being, to excite an *apprehension* of a direct tax ; and to show the easy way of avoiding it, by affording attention and employment to those who are ready to give work

in return ;—not unprofitable employment, which would be a tax of itself; but independent and profitable employment, which will enrich all parties.

It may as well be noticed here, that a certain amount of misapprehension exists in England as to the frequency of ejectments in Ireland. Tenants are very rarely changed in Ireland; but when they *are* dispossessed, in any numbers, it attracts immediate attention, because it endangers the peace of the country. The excess of sympathy which the situation of discarded tenants excites, leads often to shocking results; but that excess may be accounted for by the extreme nature of the *inconvenience* (if not the utter destitution) to which they are liable after ejectment, and the apprehension which arises among the class to which they belong, lest *they* should be reduced by like causes to a similar precarious position. But when the price of labour becomes gradually higher, tenants may gradually be changed more frequently with advantage. The English Assistant-Commissioner of Poor Inquiry says,* “Tenants also here are much more rarely “changed than in England. It would be much “more easy in most hundreds in English counties, “to point out a score of farms that had changed “hands within a certain time, than can be done in “this barony.” Not to multiply quotations from evidence that may easily be referred to, it will be sufficient to state generally, that it is quite notorious in Ireland that the very opposite of the Eng-

* Appendix F. p. 411.

lish system prevails to a very injurious extent. The tenant's right has in practice become so much too valuable, that it tends to throw the greatest impediment in the way of the employment of agricultural capital on many estates, and on those which are tolerably managed, the tenant's right is daily sold at from 5*l.* to 10*l.* per acre, and sometimes even at 12*l.* and 15*l.*,* and even more, though the land may be let at the full average rent. If this was only in consideration of the improvements that had been effected by the outgoing tenant, it would be a very excellent arrangement; but it is notorious that the most extravagant sums are given when the land is quite out of heart, and in a much worse marketable condition than if the tenant had left it to nature. The effect of an industrious incoming tenant giving a large sum to a thrifless outgoer, actually amounts to a sort of bounty on improvidence; but, besides this, it acts as a direct check upon the employment of labour; for the incomer, having given too much of his capital for the tenant-right, is unable to improve his new farm as he ought,† and is obliged to employ more of his remaining capital in grazing;

* App. F. p. 66. 20*l.* given for tenant's right of 1½ acre.

p. 72. 170*l.* of 7½ acres.

p. 75. 60*l.* of 4½ acres.

p. 75. 170*l.* of 6 acres, at

2l. 2s. an acre: "it was a common farm."

† "The tenant becomes impoverished, not by paying rent in advance, but by purchasing land at a high rate, and borrowing part, which often leaves him short." (B. Halley, *farmer,*) p. 73 *et passim.*

and less of it in labour ; and the outgoers, as a class, not being employed by the class of incomers, are obliged to go off with the sum they have received, either to cultivate lands in America, or they betake themselves to some smaller farm, or attempt some independent effort at reclaiming moor-land, without any chance of improving their condition materially : so whether ejectments are frequent under a hard-hearted system of management, or very rare (as is more frequently the case), a set of causes has been produced, even under the best systems of land-agency, which is unfavourable to the employment of capital in labour.

It must be hoped, that if the Poor Law should ultimately become effective for the encouragement of agricultural industry ; and if the landlords are wise enough, after fixing a fair rent, not to interfere too much with the sale of their tenants' rights, — the present evil will cure itself. For under an improved state of things, when the incomers discover that they can make as great a profit on a small space by spending more of their money in labour, they will only desire to purchase small additions to their farms, proportionate to their small capital : and the extravagant sums heretofore paid for tenant-right being expended on the improvement of the ground, it will become much more valuable, and the landlords will thus get a much higher rent, if they will but consent to wait till the tenants can really afford to pay it.

§ V. Objections to the proposed Poor Law considered.—Settlement.—Remarks on the existing Practice of Industrial Settlement.—Conventional Settlement which will probably be created.—Equal Pressure of the Rates on Landlords and Tenants desirable.

THE foregoing observations have been chiefly directed to the main principles of the English Poor Law, and to the ease and success with which these principles may be established in Ireland, provided they are there similarly worked out. All that remains now, is to answer some of the objections which have been made to the leading features of the Irish Bill, and to point out some defects of detail, which, however trifling they may appear at first sight, are in reality of considerable importance ; and as they involve no question of principle, can be remedied without the slightest difficulty.

Among the strongest and most practical objections which are made to the proposed Irish Poor Law, is the deficiency of a law of settlement. This objection deserves the greatest attention here, because the arguments used above go upon the assumption that a direct personal and local interest should be held out to the rate-payers, to induce them to depauperize their Unions : and in order to individualize and define this interest, some arrangement, partaking of the nature of a settlement, seems required. But perhaps it will appear, on examination, that the Guardians, the Central Commissioners, and

even the paupers themselves, will make better and more satisfactory arrangements for this purpose than the Legislature could enact.

It has been stated by gentlemen whose opinions are of the highest value, that unless the law itself points out to every rate-payer the particular individuals whom he is called upon to relieve,—namely, some certain and specific number of parishioners,—he will despair of his ability to assist them, he will feel indifferent as to the working of the measure, and will take no interest in the management of the poor. But this looks like demanding more accurate precision than is required for useful purposes. To this it might be replied, that the law despairs of enabling him to relieve all who would claim his gratuitous assistance, if they fancied that they could throw themselves upon him without subjecting themselves to inconvenience thereby; or if *he* should fancy that he could keep them in an unproductive existence without his being a sufferer by it. The object of the law is, to render the hopelessness of any such attempt intelligible to all parties—to the public, and to individuals; and the more broadly it is stated, and the sooner it is seen, the better. The scope of the law, is rather to induce able-bodied men not to claim relief, and to induce the rate-payers to teach and show able-bodied people everywhere, how they may best relieve themselves; to excite people to discover profitable employment, not to induce them to give wages (any more than alms) as charity. But lest

this should be supposed to be quibbling about terms, let us examine a little in detail, what is the practice of pauper settlement which obtains at this day in Ireland, and what are the improvements in it which will be effected under the proposed Bill.

It is popularly asserted, that the Irish are migratory in their habits, and this is, in some respects, very true; but though there is the greatest readiness to undertake a journey of any length in search of harvest-work, or any other spell of labour, it must be remarked that their *settlement*, or what may be called their permanent industrial residence, is preserved with greater tenacity in Ireland already, than any privilege which the mere written law can give. As soon as the harvest is over, they return, not only to the parish, but to the same corner of the parish, and to the very townland which they have left. This, again, is supposed by some people to arise from some sentimental attachment to the soil with which the Irish people are peculiarly affected; but numbers of these poor people, migratory yet stationary, when they have scraped together money enough to go to America, are daily seen to leave the house, the townland, and the parish where they have hitherto lived, though they know that they are never to see it again;—facts which render their motives at first sight almost inexplicable.

The true explanation of their apparent inconsistency is to be found in the circumstance, that as long as they are candidates for support from agricultural

employment in Ireland, their only chance of obtaining it is in the immediate neighbourhood where they are known : the present social system is, therefore, based upon a practical law of settlement. If a man holds a little farm, he must stick to it, or he probably will never get another : if he expects to get one by descent, by subdivision, by purchase of tenant-right, or by marriage, he must remain constantly in the neighbourhood watching it, or he will lose his chance ; and when he gets it, he must be known to have a party of neighbours ready to fight for him, or some other person who has an equitable claim upon it will snatch possession, and he will lose it.* But if he has no land, and wants to live

* It is not to be supposed that Irish landlords exercise, in ordinary practice, the same independent right of choosing their tenants as in England. They fix the rent more arbitrarily ; but, practically speaking, they do not select the tenants for *arable* farms : hence arises the sympathy which exists for tenants who are ejected for non-payment of rent. It is generally understood that tenants will make the utmost exertion to pay the rent, whatever it may amount to ; and if they fail, the popular impression, whether just or not, is sure to be, that it was the landlord's fault for fixing the rent too high. A farmer who is ejected for non-payment of the same rent that his neighbours pay punctually, excites pity, but nothing more ; the landlord need be under no apprehension of outrage. The outrages which occur most frequently will be found to originate in disputed inheritances ; and in the most intricate transactions of sale, or mortgage, or usury, for which landlords are by no means to blame.—Indeed, many of the outrages are directed against persons who are supposed to violate the national ideas relating to the rights of settlement.

by labour, he has little chance of obtaining sufficient provision for the whole year, unless he takes some conacre. The rent of this he pays for in labour—but he may fall ill, and be unable to pay for it; in that case the farmer must trust him, or he must find friends ready to assist him with their means or their credit; for it is not to be supposed that mendicancy is the immediate resort of everybody in distress—so that arrangements for hiring, and labour, are generally made only among parties who are perfectly well acquainted, and who are probably born in the same corner of the same parish. What would be called in England out-parishioners, are far less common in Ireland than in England. It is so well understood, that a man would not leave his “friends” if he could avoid it; that those who do so are looked upon with distrust and dislike, and find it particularly difficult to obtain any regular work elsewhere; and when they *have* lost their settlement, they are then but wanderers indeed, and usually betake themselves to the outskirts of towns, where they sink rapidly in condition, or they try to get employment in Great Britain.

But the striking fact is, that though they are considered to be entitled to claim land, or conacres, or work, or credit from their relations and neighbours, as long as their industrial and useful residence continues;—when once it is at an end, they may levy the alms, which form the National Poor Rate in Ireland, from every parish in the country with the

certainty of success,—EXCEPTING always the place of their former residence: so that while all the disadvantages of the law of settlement (which check the free circulation of labour) are already rife in Ireland,—while the labour-market is glutted to excess in one corner of the parish, while none of the labourers are willing or able to seek for work elsewhere,—the great advantage of a law of settlement, imposing upon each parish the necessity of providing for *its own destitute*, does not exist.

At present the landlords may screw their tenants, and the farmers may screw their cottiers, with the certainty, that as soon as they become so destitute as to be chargeable on the national rate of alms, the poor creatures will wander far away from their settlement; and that they will be altogether relieved from the painful neighbourhood of a man whom they have injured, and will also be relieved *from the burthen of supporting him*. In short, if they escape being way-laid, beaten, or killed, they escape scot free. It is shocking to think, that the only national remedy against extortion or cruelty, at the present moment, is outrage. If the Western districts, which breed pauperism to such a frightful extent, had been obliged to provide for the paupers from whose support they annually relieve themselves, at the expense of the rest of the community, during three months of the year, as has been already remarked, they would have been *forced* to get rid of the evils of joint-tenancy. The present state of things, is just

as if the parish considered itself bound to find a settlement for labour and living, which should always be left quite unfettered, and NOT to contribute to the relief of the really destitute, which is precisely what it *ought* to do.

The effect of the proposed Irish Poor Law will be to reverse this faulty system ; to give a much freer range to industry, and to give a practical settlement to destitution. The danger of making any legal definition of what the settlement should be, is, that it checks a labourer from seeking employment out of his parish ; and checks a rate-payer from giving an out-parishioner employment or a residence, lest by so doing he should confer a legal right of settlement upon persons who have not yet acquired, what both parties would consider to be, a moral right to relief. Again, when a *bond fide* necessity for relief has actually occurred, (if the law has not been correct in its definition of what the settlement should be,) it may entail a hardship both upon the parish and upon the pauper : it is impossible accurately to fix by law, what the moral claim upon a particular district for relief should be ; of this the paupers themselves, (if the system of management is similar in every Union,) will perhaps be the best judges. But the Guardians will hear their plea, and if they disallow it, will probably enter into correspondence with the parish which they conceive has a stronger claim ; and if it is there resisted, the Central Commission will form a ready court of appeal between the re-

spective parties. The claim of an able-bodied male or female pauper, in a district where they are unknown, will be considered, of course, as a presumptive evidence of fraud on their part, and as a proof of their wish to relieve their natural protectors, for a time, from the duty of their support. The Guardians will probably give an order (according to Lord Salisbury's excellent system in the Hatfield Union) to relieve all who may apply for admission into the workhouse till the next weekly meeting, by whose decision the case will be governed ; but as the support will only be given in exchange for a daily spell of work, it will be sufficient to give a stranger half an hour's more work, per day, than he would get in his own Union, to send him quickly back home again. If a proper system of correspondence is organized to detect frauds, and a defensive alliance is instituted between parishes, instead of that ruinous system of offensive warfare which used to exist in England under the old system, the greatest advantages will arise. If the pauper is able-bodied, and anxious for work, he will prefer going to a workhouse situated in the market-town to which the neighbouring farmers resort ; and if he is impotent, and likely to remain there, he will wish to enjoy the society of acquaintances rather than strangers, within the walls, and the visits of neighbours from without.

There seem many strong motives for desiring some sort of conventional settlement, in the first instance,

because it will tend to exhibit at first, with greater force to the rate-payers than could otherwise be done, the impolicy of allowing destitution to occur, and the expediency and practicability of giving an immediate impulse to local co-operation for local improvements. Besides, it must be remembered, that the farmers would not trust an unknown mendicant out of the workhouse with conacres, or with employment; so that he cannot obtain an independent existence as a labourer, according to the present custom of the country, except in the neighbourhood where he is known. At the same time there seem many reasons for encouraging any improvements which may occur in hiring, by not attempting to *fix* any settlement *by law*, and by permitting the custom to vary with the varying circumstances of person, and time, and place; so that unless any unforeseen necessity should hereafter arise, (which may be *possible*,) and as any legal enactment may always be superadded if required, there seems every inducement to wait for the appearance of the necessity, before a law of settlement is established.

The necessity for the arrangement of some conventional settlement will be greatest at the first introduction of a Poor Law, in order to get the wandering destitute back to those districts where they have the best chance of finding an independent livelihood. Those who think that such arrangements may be dispensed with altogether, seem to suppose that the mendicants are equally distributed at pre-

sent through the different parishes of Ireland, and that their chance of employment is pretty much the same in each ; when, on the contrary, the existing state of things is far different : the mendicants are *not* fairly distributed at present, and ought to be *gradually* induced to go back to their respective parishes, as it is *there* only that they can obtain employment. But their habits and prejudices must be treated with tenderness and consideration at first, and the public will soon admit of themselves the improved practice which will thereby be introduced : whereas a strict unending *law* of settlement (which may, perhaps, be never required,) might be found harsh, oppressive, and impracticable, at the first formation of the Unions.

Next to the objection which is made concerning the absence of a law of settlement, comes another point of attack which is frequently pressed in Ireland against the proposed tax ; namely, that although the bill promises to make the landlords contribute one-half of the rate, *that* part of the law is not capable of being enforced ; and that the proprietors of land possess such uncontrolled power over their tenants, that they will contrive to extract the share which ought to fall upon the proprietors, out of the pockets of the occupiers, in the shape of additional rent,—so that the latter will still in reality pay the whole tax, as before. It must be hoped that this objection will not prove well founded,

and it will require the constant attention of the Legislature to strive to remedy any such defect, if it should be found practicable to do so; as the rapid working of the anticipated improvement, will depend principally on the landlords being made sensible, that a portion of the burthen of pauperism falls immediately upon them: but it is remarkable, that the same parties who make this assertion, declare, that the law ought not to charge the tenant with *any* portion of the poor-rate, which should be levied solely from the landlords. But this involves an obvious contradiction; for if the landlord's power is *really* so uncontrollable, and if he is *really* enabled to screw the whole tax out of the tenants, it is surely desirable that the tenant should at least get the credit of his payment, and, by becoming the ostensible, as well as the actual rate-payer, claim his lawful share in the administration of his own money.

For if there is the slightest truth in the preceding remarks and in the theoretical advantages of the proposed law, the whole question of its success resolves itself purely into a question of administration. The workhouse principle must not only be strictly maintained, but the tenantry must become fully conversant with the consequences and effects of the new law. The law must not only be well administered, but it must be worked by the people themselves; and the agents whom they select as Guardians must partake in their feelings

and interests, and then they will promptly, and easily explain the workings of the system in their own way to their constituents. The truth is, humiliating as it may appear at first sight to the gentlemen, that it will in fact be easier to explain the working of the law to the farmers than to the gentry; because the latter, as a body, are not so well acquainted with the habits of the labourers and paupers: and the farmers, if they are consulted, not in their individual, but *in their collective capacity*, will administer the law better. If the tax were to be imposed solely on landlords, and administered solely by landlords, it would not be nearly so well done: the paupers might be equally well provided for when reduced to the extremity of the work-house, and their cases might be equally well investigated; but there would not be the same means of preventing persons from becoming paupers; and the whole class of non-rate-paying farmers would find it for their short-sighted interest to press on the whole class of landlords, if the latter were the only rate-payers. The great advantage therefore in taxing the farmers is, to be able to throw the administration into their hands. Those who really attend to their interests, have seldom seen them directly consulted hitherto, and are incredulous that it is really and *bona fide* the intention of the Legislature to trust them with the management of their own affairs; but if the scheme is to work beneficially, it is absolutely necessary that this trust should be reposed in

them in the fullest and freest manner. Again, it is much more fair to the landlords themselves that the administration should fall principally into the hands of the tenants; because in no other way can the landlords' interests be fairly represented. If the business were to be done through the landlords alone, two or three extensive proprietors of three-fourths of a Union, whose interests were largely at stake, might be counteracted by the votes of half a dozen smaller proprietors, whose interests were of trifling comparative amount. But, on the other hand, to throw the administration exclusively into the hands of the tenantry, and to exclude the gentry, either from principle or in practice, — when the gentry are possessed of such immense power for good or for evil as in Ireland, and where their interests are so directly concerned, — would be contrary to every principle of sound policy, and would immediately raise up a natural spirit of distrust, and hostility, on the part of a class who have the means of giving effect to their feelings, and whom it is of the most vital consequence to influence favourably and to conciliate. The institution of ex-officio Guardians therefore is most useful. But it is probable, that if the doors of the Board-room are opened wide enough, the great majority, as in England, will rarely seek admission; and that the complaint will shortly arise, that they do not afford their attendance.

§ VI. *Grounds of Apprehension as to the correct Working of the Poor Law.—Effect of Workhouse on Wages.—5l. Clause.—Size of Unions.—Convenience should be the first consideration.—The Rate to act as a Stimulus for profitable Employment of Independent Labour.—That Stimulus can only be applied through the agency of the Guardians.—Selection and Payment of Guardians.—Clergy.*

HAVING thus expressed an opinion so decidedly favourable to the theory and principles upon which the proposed Irish Poor Law is based, let us next proceed to examine the probability of its details being worked out in the spirit of the English Poor Law. The people of Ireland have been so accustomed to see the *letter* of the law assimilated, and the spirit violated, that they may be excused if they feel some distrust as to the operation of this new panacea. The first thing that excites apprehension, is the different view, which has been expressed, of the effect to be produced by the workhouse in the two countries. Some of the English theorists, who argue with most truth in England, constantly lose sight of their own theory in discussing Irish Poor Laws ; and, cloak it as they may, they imagine that the poor-house may safely be made more attractive than the wretched cabins which they see around them in Ireland : but in this they are mistaken. There seems always to be a latent notion prevalent among the English supporters of the measure, that the direct agency of the workhouse ought to be to act upon wages ; that when an Irish labourer gets wages lower than *they* consider fair, or

lives in a hovel which *they* consider unhealthy,—though at present he is willing to put up with that inconvenience, rather than undergo the test of mendicancy,—he may be safely allowed to accept of the test of the workhouse; or, in other words, that the workhouse may safely be made less distasteful to an able-bodied pauper than mendicancy now is. If this principle is once admitted by the Poor Law Commissioners with respect to able-bodied persons in Ireland, the country will immediately be overburthened by paupers, and we shall indeed be miserable. It is supposed by some people, who reason *a priori*, that when the poor have got to the lowest scale of existence, as in Ireland, a workhouse cannot then be opened without their all rushing into it. Persons who are practically conversant with the habits of the Irish poor, know, however, full well, that there will be nothing more easy, than to make such regulations as will effectually prevent those able-bodied men who *can* obtain an independent existence, according to the usages of the country, from seeking admission; but these are questions of detail which the Legislature is incompetent to treat, in which the assistance of local experience is imperatively required—much accurate information must be sought, which the Poor Law authorities should collect first, and then distribute. It is probable, for example, that an English Legislature (if it were to attempt it) would make the test of work too high, and would not make the diet low enough; but if the English Le-

gislature, or the Central Commissioners, should take upon themselves to make the test *less* stringent than that which already exists, they will make a mistake of the most pernicious and fatal kind. For it is very possible to conceive (though by no means probable), that the regulations and discipline might be so mismanaged, as to repel the pauper too severely in England, while they were permitted to attract him into the workhouse in Ireland; and thus the same law, word for word, might produce opposite results in the two countries, depauperizing England, and plunging parts of Ireland into a depth of misery, deeper than that in which they are already sunk. But there is no ground for anticipating so much mismanagement when the system is under a responsible Central control, who will watch over the discipline, and who have too extended an experience to entertain so large an amount of error about wages. But if this evil should actually occur, it would be of all things the most difficult to persuade the English public, that the fault did not lie somewhere in the inherent nature of the Irish people, rather than in the defective working of the institution itself.

It is hoped that the ultimate effect of the Poor Law will be, to cause a gradual but steady rise in the rate of wages; but the surest, if not the only, method of promoting improvement in wages is, not to encourage the poor labourers to flock to the workhouse, but to encourage farmers to learn the way of employing labour profitably, and labourers to learn

the way of giving better work in return for better wages. To produce this result, the farmers should dread the rate, and the cottiers should dread the workhouse.

Another source of distrust, arises from the very mistaken ideas prevalent in England about large farms. Large farms are excellent things, and so are large shops; but the Legislature should no more attempt to favour the one than the other. "Laissez-nous faire," was the reply of the French merchants to the minister of Louis XIV, and should be the motto of the Irish farmers. If once the social machine is put into proper action, agricultural capital will quickly accumulate, and farms will be brought to a more convenient size; but though a Poor Law is eminently required to put the social machine into proper motion, it should not attempt anything more, or it will do the greatest mischief, and fall into endless error. These remarks are made in consequence of the insertion of what is called the "5*l.* clause" in the Poor Law Bill; by which clause it is enacted, that tenants who occupy below a net value of 5*l.* should be exempted from rate. But the promoters of this clause must have altogether overlooked the fact, that there are numerous districts in the west of Ireland, where perhaps nine-tenths of the farmers, or more, occupy holdings below the value of 5*l.* If it is a good thing to throw the administration out of the hands of the farmers, and to throw the burthen off their shoulders, in the west, it ought to be good also in the

east ; but these pauper farmers, as they may perhaps be disparagingly called by English journalists, afford all the work, make two-thirds of the rent at least, and their assistance and co-operation is required in every step the landlord takes : yet, by this clause, these men will all be interested to lean upon the rates, and against the landlord, instead of acting *with* him. The whole fault arises, from the difficulty which naturally occurs to English minds, in minimizing their ideas down to the standard of things as they are in Ireland. A 5*l.* farmer is supposed, from the analogy of their experience in England, to be on the verge of destitution ; whereas, in truth, if he lives (not under a *good*, but) under a *tolerable* landlord, he is quite secure from that calamity as tested by mendicancy. But, then, it may be asked whether a 2*l.* limit would be sufficiently low ? To that it may be answered, from personal experience, that there are landlords of extensive estates, and small revenues, in the western parts of the country, who have between one and two thousand accounts with farmers (not cottiers) who, when 40*s.* receipt stamps were in use, did not require a stamped receipt upon the payment of their rent. So that, if it is intended, as it ought to be, to obtain the assistance of all the farmers everywhere, the only practicable plan will be, to give the exemption to cottiers only ; and, as value is variable in different districts, to give to the Commissioners the power of fixing the value below which the rate should not be charged on the occupier : with

the clear understanding, that any person who occupies half a rood of *land* (however inconsiderable may be the value of the premises) shall pay his full share of the rate; for even the exemption of cottiers is of the most doubtful policy, and is altogether at variance with the spirit of the English law. The 5*l.* clause is recommended by Mr. Nicholls on the ground of convenience; and can only be popular in Ireland among those who have not studied the working of the measure, by its practical adaptation to peculiar districts. It will, in numerous cases, throw the greatest obstacles in the way of the very object it is probably intended to promote—the consolidation of small farms,—and will materially impede the breaking up of joint-tenancy. It certainly induces landlords to discountenance subdivision, but *that* they do already without success; and it supplies an additional motive to tenants to subdivide. Yet it will eventually be disadvantageous to the tenant, because it takes all claim to the administration of the fund altogether out of his hands.

As has been before remarked, the law itself may, possibly, be equally well administered by the landlords as by the farmers the workhouse test being so simple, and so easily applied. The advantages, however, in such case, will be limited to the direct benefit of supplying a better sort of food and shelter to the mendicants, which will certainly be an important improvement; but all the great class of other benefits, derived from inducing all parties

to *prevent the creation of destitution*, will be entirely lost in many districts by the 5*l.* clause.

There will not be wanting, moreover, various questions of detail, in which the greatest difficulty will be created by this 5*l.* clause. Persons will apply for relief whose stock of potatoes is exhausted, and will go into the workhouse; but the relief there given ought perhaps, in their particular case, to be afforded by way of loan. Again, other persons will wish to evade the law, by sending their wives and children into the house for a short season, and continue at work themselves,—and the Board will send their officer to make inquiry into these various circumstances; but the whole population, not being rate-payers, will sympathise with the schemer, and will try to thwart the officer, who must perform his duty of collecting evidence, by trick and manœuvre, instead of doing it in a straightforward, open manner. Surely the inconvenience of this difficulty, which will be of constant occurrence, will be greater than any convenience which the 5*l.* clause can afford. And as, after all, the rate is to be collected from the tenant, and is only to be deducted in full by him in his settlement with his landlord, the convenience to the Poor Law management is not so very striking. The difficulty which will be found in getting rid of mendicancy, will also be much increased by making this distinction among the farmers; the larger farmers will not give alms, but the more numerous class below 5*l.* will

continue to do so, despite of all enactments to the contrary.

There is yet another difficulty, however, in this £5. clause: it seems that the rate is to fall almost exclusively on the landlords in the western counties, who may be said to be generally the poorest class of landlords, with the greatest number of paupers, in the United Kingdom, and are seldom found residing in those wretched districts; and hence this important question arises,—Who will practically have the management of the rate? Not the great majority of the tenantry on the one hand, or the landlords on the other; but those few occupiers who are found to hold above £5.—who, though they are few in comparison to the other tenantry, will largely outnumber the landlords. So that we shall have one class taxing another, for the benefit or injury of a third,—a system from which no good can possibly be anticipated. And presently, when abuses grow out of that state of things, there will be required a series of checks, as we see under the Grand Jury system, which will materially clog the utility of the measure; and which are unnecessary when the tax is levied by the *bond fide* representatives of the rate-payers, who really possess their confidence. So that in many districts it would be much fairer to levy the rate exclusively, and avowedly, upon the landlords at once, and give them the management of it, than to exempt any class of farmers, however small.

The next important point which should be adverted to, is with respect to the size and conformation of the Unions.

The judicious arrangement of these unions, and of the districts into which they will be subdivided, is of the utmost importance. It is to be regretted, on some accounts, that the Government thought it necessary, to publish an estimate of the number of unions which might be required; as it is probable that even the most ingenuous minds, when they have committed themselves to a hasty opinion, without the means of forming a correct judgment on the point, will feel a tendency to lean to the opinion which they have so expressed. But as an opinion *has* been expressed, that it might be possible to manage the Poor Law in eighty work-houses, with unions of four hundred square miles, and that it is probable that one hundred unions will be found to be sufficient, it is necessary to make some remarks upon that head.

It is evident that in Ireland, where there is no local organization worthy of the name, it would be vain and mischievous to suggest any control to the power of the Commissioners, as they will act better in this respect than any other body; but it is as well to point out that the tendency of their *interest*, and of that of their servants, the Assistant Commissioners and Secretaries, (if they are upright men, and desire credit and not patronage,) will be to make the unions as large as possible, and the

districts into which they are divided as few as possible. It is easier for the Assistant Commissioners to explain the law to a small board of the highest class of farmers, than to a large board of the inferior classes; and much easier to explain the law in one large union of four hundred square miles, than in four moderate unions of one hundred each: it is easier to control and instruct one set of paid officers, than four sets:—and it is easier for the Central Board to conduct one hundred sets of correspondence, than four hundred:—and the point to which they will look with honest pride, will be the economy with which their own staff will be organized, and the economy of the grand totals, which, it is admitted, must be worked out with a greater apparent saving in a large class of unions, than in those of more moderate and otherwise more convenient dimensions.

It is said that the first unions which were formed in England (which were, on an average, below fifty square miles, but often very much smaller,) are thought to be too small at present; but that does not prove that they were too small at the period of their formation, for the greatest proof in praise of the good working of the system is, when the union becomes too small, and the workhouses too large: and if unions are depauperized quicker when they are small, it is better to go to the additional expense of changing their conformation, than to

continue pauperism for the sake of managing the paupers economically; and it is also cheaper.

The greatest blame will attach to the Central Commission, if they are ever required to enlarge their workhouses, or to diminish their unions: but the consolidation of small unions into large, is the greatest proof of the success of their operation; and if the workhouses are built with that view, the change will cost very little. The wishes of the parties most interested should be sought out and consulted; and if the Central Commission explains the greater expense which a small union will entail upon the parties themselves, they will be found very amenable to the force of that argument. If the Central Commission yields to the wishes of the parties, and thinks at the same time, that on future experience, they will regret the small size of their district, they may direct a great part of the workhouse to be built of the commonest materials, resembling precisely the cabins of the population in everything excepting in uncleanliness, and thus the expense of consolidation will be much diminished. The same plan may be adopted in a great part of the workhouses everywhere, as they must all be made larger at first than will be hereafter required; therefore only a certain portion of them need be built in a very substantial manner. It is quite idle to form unions for the sake of *ultimate* convenience; what is wanted is, to *depauperize the country*, as quickly as possible, forth-

with. The advantages of the proposed system are two-fold. One consists in providing cheap and healthy support for the destitute ; *that* is a matter essentially within the province of the administration, is capable of proof in vulgar arithmetic, and can be drawn out on balance-sheets and in tabular forms. The other advantage of the system is unseen to the public eye, and the administration do not get the credit of it ; but it is much more important, and consists in preventing people from becoming destitute, by stimulating the search after profitable employment. In England this stimulus was principally required by the labourers ; *in Ireland it must be applied to the farmers and landlords.* In England it was of the greatest importance to hold up the work-house in dread ; in Ireland, it will be of the greatest importance to hold up *the rate* in dread. The dread of the rate will be effective, in direct proportion to the number of Guardians who are able to diffuse that feeling, and in inverse proportion to the extent over which it has to act ; therefore, the more that feeling is individualized by making small districts, the quicker the measure will operate. In England it operated immediately, and with the greatest strength, because each parish is rated separately. It is very much to be regretted that an analogous plan cannot be introduced for a short time into Ireland : but that is impossible, as there seems no guide to any impartial principle on which small districts for rating could be chalked out *de-*

novo; and, if it is not practicable, it becomes doubly important that the unions should err on the side of being too small, rather than on that of being too large. But even if an average of fifty square miles is too small, is that any reason why the Irish unions should be *eight* times that size? The great object which should be sought is, not to obtain the most economical, or even the most permanent arrangement, or the most uniform size; but the most convenient arrangement, and the most uniform *principle*: and as the unions will also form the settlement of the paupers, it is most essential for every sound object that the natural arrangements of the country should not be dislocated, or nothing but difficulty can ensue. The average *sizes* of England may be found too small for Ireland, or perhaps too large; but the *principle* which regulates the formation of English unions is perfect. The Commissioners have laid it down as a rule, that the first point to be considered is the selection of the principal market-town of the district, towards which the district centralizes itself naturally; and the country which brings its produce to that market is included in one union, with the workhouse in the centre. This is also recommended by Mr. Nicholls in his first Report. It is an admirable principle, and as it is good in England, it must also be good in Ireland; or rather, it is much *more* necessary in Ireland, because it seems the only convenient settlement which offers itself for paupers, and the only impar-

tial method of deciding the conflicting interests which the arrangement of those districts will involve. But if this rule is followed; it requires but little acquaintance with Ireland to know that the number of one hundred workhouses must be considerably exceeded. From the much greater number of farmers, and from produce being sold in bulk instead of by sample, the markets are more numerous, and the districts on which they depend are smaller, than in England. The produce of four hundred square miles of country brought to one market in bulk, would argue a scale of business never seen in inland towns. The distance from one market-town to another rarely exceeds ten miles, and is usually less, and these would form ample unions. But it will be most essential also, particularly in the first instance, that the districts for which, and by which, Guardians are elected, should be as numerous as possible, consistent with the transaction of business.

It must be evident that, to the Assistant Commissioners, a numerous Board of Guardians are particularly troublesome; that it will be more difficult to convince them, and to keep them to the point in debate, in proportion as they are numerous. There are other inconveniences also incident to a numerous Board. But, on the other hand, the object to be gained is, to explain the operation of a new and direct tax, and also to explain how it may be avoided; to get rid of joint-tenancy; to improve the bargains of conacre; to suppress out-door relief

(which in Ireland has assumed the shape of alms); and to induce the people themselves voluntarily to withhold this relief, or at least, to give alms only to people with whom they are personally acquainted as being deserving of their charity;—for that is the only effectual plan. All this can only be done orally, and through the agency of the Guardians. If the relief of unknown mendicants should still be permitted to continue, the principal merit of the Poor Law will be destroyed. As long as visions of Government works, and other popular projects, are afloat connected with a Poor Law, the unpopularity of the measure in Ireland among the farmers may be suppressed; indeed there are so many Utopian projects for Ireland constantly *talked of*, but never seen, and they have such a very vague idea of what a Poor Law may be, that they have never yet begun (in the rural parts of Ireland) to occupy their minds seriously about it. But as soon as they discover that they are to be made to pay hard money, “under the *pretext*” (as they will say) of supporting the beggars in the workhouse, to whom they would much rather give a potato at home, and “*in reality*” (as they will say) to support a gang of jobbing parish officers,—that moment the general outcry will begin; and will be most violent, of course, among those classes who do not pay at present in proportion to their property. These are the higher, and hitherto the most influential classes of farmers. The only way of meeting the outcry beneficially will

be, by simply following the course pursued in England,—by making the representatives of the people very numerous, and by taking pains to convince their reason. When once they are so treated, they will be found very much more tractable than the English farmers. But in unions of such extravagant dimensions as four hundred square miles, the districts for which Guardians are elected must be proportionately large ; and their influence over their constituents, spread over too large a surface, cannot be felt. It will be of the most vital consequence, therefore, that the Guardians should be numerous at first.

Lastly, there is another point to consider, on which the whole question may ultimately be found to hinge ; and that is, the mode of selecting and paying the Guardians. The preceding remarks have been written with the understanding, that the Guardians are to be elected by the rate-payers. But when the peculiar circumstances of the country are considered, it seems quite unlikely that these last should, in all cases, be capable of making the best selection of individuals to fill the office of Guardians ; unless the Central Commission should be enabled, in some of the poor arable districts, to pay them for their attendance ; as without such payment they would not be in a condition to afford the time requisite for attending to the business of the union : and as this may prove one of the most important

parts of the measure, it is necessary to consider it very deliberately in all its bearings.

And, first, as to its popularity : it must be admitted that the payment of Guardians would not be popular at present in Ireland. The trades of Dublin have petitioned against the payment of Guardians, and they are quite right ; for in Dublin, or in any town, and in very many country districts, the payment of Guardians is not only a very unnecessary expense, but it would be actually mischievous ; because it might introduce into the management of the poor, a class of busy, meddling, jobbing persons, who would overlook the true interests of the poor in search of a false popularity, and would throw, both by their own salaries and by their mismanagement, a very unnecessary expense on the rates : whereas the most important consideration should be to introduce into the management those only whose interests are most immediately concerned as employers of the poor ; and who, from the extent of their transactions, have the greatest interest in the diminution of the rate, and the greatest power to diminish it, by giving profitable employment. These people have generally no time to spare in unnecessary details, and it is important therefore that these details should be simplified, and thrown, as much as possible, on paid officers responsible to them ; and that they, who are the leading industrial classes, should not be jostled out of the management by the worry of others not so

directly interested, and who would prove in the end, not only an expense, but a torment. The people themselves feel this, and therefore they have wisely petitioned against the payment of the Guardians in Dublin. In the rural districts, where the farmers are able to attend gratuitously, the same remarks will apply.

But there are very many districts, where the arable farms are so small, that the occupiers cannot be expected to give their gratuitous attendance: and if the Central Commission should disregard this peculiarity,—and should not stimulate a selection of these poor farmers, both by urgent advice and also by payment, in cases where this may be found necessary,—the whole management of the poor will be thrown into the hands of a class who are not employers of labour; that is, of the graziers. But the graziers on that very account will be indifferent in their attendance; and, from the peculiar nature of their business, being absent frequently at distant fairs in the spring and autumn, will be irregular: so that there will be an inefficient and irregular attendance at the Board of Guardians; the evils of which are most ably pointed out, in the 17th and 18th pages of the Third Report of the Poor Law Commissioners of England and Wales.

The evil, however, would not stop there: for if we could suppose that the graziers would be ready steady in their attendance, and if they were anxious for the best interests of the unemployed poor, still

it must be doubted whether the pursuit in which they are engaged would (notwithstanding their superior wealth) afford them facilities equal to those which the poor farmers possess for the depauperizing of the district. It is of the utmost importance in a poor country not to displace capital by the action of the laws. Very many enthusiasts about farming in Ireland, fancy that tillage should be extended by turning up good grass. This may be pronounced under ordinary circumstances to be a great error. It is a well-known agricultural fact, that in many soils old grass is invaluable to the occupier, and cannot be profitably converted into tillage ; and therefore, if graziers are led to suppose that the fresh employment required is to be sought for mainly on *their* land, great mischief would be done. It would be much more profitable to employ labour in making better arable ground of that which is already in tillage, than to expend an equal quantity of work upon grass-land. And yet if graziers, exclusively, got possession of the Board of Guardians, the only popular impression that could be conveyed would be, that their superior wealth, as a class, imposed on them, personally, the duty of promoting the employment of the able-bodied. And when they found that they could not do so with advantage, they would probably raise one universal cry for emigration, which, if it was successful, would in the end tend to mortgage the rate in a way which the district might perhaps never after recover.

The evils, therefore, of tempting, into the management of the poor, persons who have not a direct natural interest in their employment, and so unduly pressing them to divert their capital from the profitable business in which it is already engaged, is a course which might prove very fatal. The evils of this might not be immediately apparent; but the measure would be found after a little trial to work ill. It is unnecessary to remark, that in a country where the graziers are the only thriving people, it is a very popular business, and they are a very respectable, intelligent, and superior class of persons. The poor farmers have been led into cultivation more for a subsistence than for profit, and are not looked up to like the graziers. It will not be so easy, therefore, to procure their election; but, whenever they *are* elected, it will be easy for the graziers to get placed on the Board by the grazing districts in sufficient numbers to counterbalance any unfair preponderance of farmers. Even though the poorer class of farmers should be paid, and the graziers should be unpaid,—which is the course most strongly to be recommended,—there will be no difficulty in finding out their relative positions in the world; as the rate-book will show (almost invariably) that the graziers are the largest occupiers, and will give the Central Commission a clue, as to whether the individual elected can afford his gratuitous attendance or not.

If the Poor Law should not work well, and if

paupers should increase, instead of diminishing in numbers, the public will never permit the work-house system to be continued, as an increasing number of inmates would shock public opinion very justly. But though the public would be right in the main, they would not probably perceive the cause of the total failure of an apparently plausible theory. And public agitation would be directed against the Central Commission, against the work-houses, or against any other part of the system, sooner than against the popular graziers, who might have attended gratuitously and zealously, and done all things according to the best of their skill ; and yet, not have been able to afford any efficient stimulus to profitable employment, or to reduce the rate of progress by which pauperism is now advancing. If once agitation begins on the subject of the Poor Law in Ireland, all the expected good to be derived from it will be defeated. The way to prevent that contingency is to make it work speedily, and to apply the stimulus of the Poor Rate in the quarter which can give profitable employment most immediately to the poor. A season of trial is given to the Poor Law, in consideration of the sacred duty which it is called upon to perform, and which makes all political agitation upon the subject unpopular at present. If it works well, its sacred character will still continue to protect it ; but under a popular government, a new broom *must be made* to sweep clean, or it will not be permitted to

sweep at all ; and if the Poor Law does not produce benefit very promptly, it will not have time given it to act.

It is, therefore, essential that the Central Commission should understand the root of the evil, and should explain it to such of the people as do not understand it themselves ; but who will be found most willing to be taught. They ought to seize the salient peculiarity of the Irish rural districts, namely, that the only employers of labour are themselves very poor ; and they ought to do everything in their power, therefore, to familiarize that very class of persons with the operation of the law, and to bring them into contact with it.

These people are not themselves aware of the important position which they occupy as a class in the community : no public duties have ever been entrusted to them, and they are not used to the management of business. They will be backward and diffident under these disadvantages, and will feel hurt sometimes at the flippant manner of those who are their superiors in these respects ; and everything should be done to give them confidence in their own powers.

We do not find that in England, persons who are rated to the amount of 10*l.* are disposed to give up their time, or to be elected to fill the duties of Guardians ; simply for the reason—that their attendance would cost them more than the most flagrant misapplication of the parochial funds: but there

will probably be many districts in the west of Ireland where there will be nobody rated above 10*l.* so that there will be no practical representation in those districts ; or, if perchance there *should* be two or three graziers in one corner of the district,—or, which would be worse, if the district should be originally formed, for the purpose of including a little knot of persons resident in some extreme angle of it, who could afford their gratuitous attendance,—they might possibly be the very people in whom the mass of the rate-payers would feel least confidence; and who might have the largest direct interest in thwarting the operation of the law, by preaching about the cruelty of the workhouse, or by many other methods.

But, not to go to such extreme cases, it is quite notorious that the class of persons which forms the body of the English Guardians, does not exist in Ireland, although there are very excellent and intelligent men, whose services could be had for a mere trifle,—a few pence per mile, or three or four pounds at the end of the year, sufficient to defray the cost of their attendance at the Board,—and who, from being placed just a little above their neighbours in circumstances, are already considered their natural guardians,—are appealed to as referees in all quarrels,—and are the executors and witnesses of their wills. These men are in the habit, perhaps, of going to the market-town on the market and Board day, every week ; but they are

not in a condition to attend the Board gratuitously. They are taking a pig into the market, or have got a firkin of butter to sell, and would have to employ an assistant, which they could not, and would not afford.

It must always be remembered, that the Board of Guardians in England diminished the old Poor Rate, so that they are paid by the saving in the rate as well as by popularity; that they were already very familiar with the transaction of business, so that it was no great exertion to them; — that they were accustomed to the exercise of power, and knew how to appreciate the parish importance that it confers on them: whereas, in Ireland, the Guardians will have to impose a tax, and also a restraint hitherto unheard of, and run some risk of unpopularity; the farmers are unused to business, and are thinking, not of power, but of subsistence. Besides all this, the English Guardians are, each of them, representatives of a separate parish, which is separately rated, so that his individual interest is very closely concerned: whereas, in Ireland, the rate will extend equally over every district within the Union, and, notwithstanding all these causes, which will dissuade the poor farmers from accepting the office — *they*, and they only, are the people through whose agency the stimulus of the Poor Rate can be usefully, profitably, *quickly*, and extensively applied.

But it may be said, that if once the principle of

payment is introduced, it will be difficult to know where to stop. That depends entirely upon *what* principle is introduced. It is not the mere abstract payment of Guardians that is bad, but the probability that the payment of them may introduce a bad description of persons into parochial business. Now, it seems that the object ought to be, to introduce that class of persons who have the most power of preventing destitution by being employers of labour. In other countries the employers of labour are rich, and able to afford their attendance on public duties; but in Ireland there is this remarkable and essential difference, that the only employers of labour are often too poor to attend gratuitously; and those who are rich, have vested their capital in a business which requires the least possible quantity of labour, and where the labour cannot be very much extended without a sacrifice of profit: so that the principle of encouraging the attendance of that class of persons, merely because they can afford their attendance gratuitously, would be faulty.

Here is found the great and important advantage of a Central control. It will be for the Central Commission to take the circumstances of each district into consideration, and by the stimulus of advice, and by *payment* if absolutely necessary, to strive to obtain from the rate-payers, (who have not yet turned their attention to such matters,) the election of such a Guardian, as shall properly represent the description of employment

most easily afforded in the district. The Commissioners must take care that the sum paid will be sufficient to procure attendance, but not sufficient to allow the office of Guardian to be made a trade of. To an independent Central power alone could the decision and alteration of all these details, according to the varying circumstances of time and place, be intrusted with confidence. And after a few years, when the office is more sought after,—when capitalists have learned to invest their money in labour instead of in cattle,—and when they thus employ it for the advantage of the community as well as for their own ;—when contests arise for an office which will then be discovered to confer an honour,—these contests will supply a ready signal to the Commission, that an unnecessary expense may be curtailed, and that the allowance may be safely diminished or withdrawn ; and the unpaid Guardians on the Board will always be found ready enough to urge the Central Commission to make this economy, as the pay of the small-farmer Guardian will be derived from the rate which comes out of their pockets.

If the Board of Guardians were not under higher and immediate control, it might be difficult to discontinue the custom when it ceased to be beneficial. But there seems little risk of payment being considered a permanent custom, when it will probably vary with every district, and with every year, and when the very novel and distinct grounds for the

payment are broadly laid down and acted on from the first.

A very unnecessary excitement has occurred in consequence, chiefly, of the non-payment of the Guardians. Those who consider the workings of the Bill, see that the rate-payers will find it difficult to select eligible unpaid Guardians in many districts, and it immediately occurs to them that the difficulty might be obviated by electing the clergyman, who is capable of gratuitous attendance; but then they find that he is specifically excluded by a clause in the Bill, and the supposed hardship of the clause is immediately commented on. But if the rate-payers could find a trusty lay representative by any means (such as by paying him), it would never occur to them to elect a clergyman: in truth, the latter would not seek for, or accept the office; the duty is not one of charity, but purely of regulation, and the clergy would be placed in an invidious and unusual position with their parishioners, when they were found distributing, not charity, but hard work—not always administering consolation to the poor, but more frequently cross-examination. This would appear harsh from a clergyman. Evidence is given in the Irish Poor Inquiry, of Catholic clergymen declining to act as trustees to charitable loan funds, not because they were unwilling to be charitable, but because they disliked the harsh, but necessary task of refusing charity, which they considered an unbecoming office for them.

§ VII. *Want of Roads, and Want of Money—how to be supplied.*

HAVING thus endeavoured to describe the principles which should be studied and the machinery which should be supplied for the operation of the Irish Poor Law, it is perhaps necessary to go one step further, and point out what will shortly be its indirect effect, *if it works well*, upon two other matters of local detail which are intimately connected with the means of supplying work to the poor.

It is commonly asserted that the poor cannot be set to work in Ireland, because of,

1. The want of roads :
2. The want of money.

And it will be interesting to inquire shortly, whether there are any obvious improvements which can be made in the laws tending to remedy these two wants, which will be compelled or hastened by the new Poor Law. And first, with respect to the existing state of the road-laws.

The roads are now made and repaired at the expense of the county ; there are few or no turnpikes, and the county cess (or rate) is levied on the occupiers only, and not on the landlords ; but the machinery by which the wishes of the county on the subject are ascertained is exceedingly defective.

The roads in Ireland were originally repaired by statute labour of the parishes, as in England ; but as this duty was often neglected, it was found necessary, about seventy or eighty years ago, to enable

the Grand Juries to impose a tax upon the different baronies (or union of parishes) to rectify this omission: and this was so much more convenient than the old method, and the great advantages of this plan over the old one were so apparent—that the Grand Jury system, as it was called, became very popular, and was annually extended, and the statute labour was abolished. There is no doubt that from the first, the twenty-three gentlemen who were invested with the irresponsible power of putting their hands into the pockets of all the occupiers of the county, were apt to look with a favourable eye upon the roads leading through their own estates, or to their own houses; but though they favoured themselves considerably, they at the same time benefited the community; and the weight of the Irish carts of that day was so trifling, that very little expense was required for repairs. In process of time, however, as the roads improved, the carts increased both in weight and number, and the expense of repairs increased in proportion; and as other considerable charges were incurred for building gaols, for an expensive constabulary force, and for other payments thrown upon the county cess, that impost became exceedingly burthensome and unpopular. Checks without end were put upon the maladministration of the funds,—but as is usual in such cases, these checks, which at first were mere oaths, and since have consisted in a multiplication of intricate forms,—though they deterred the most

honest and the quietest members of society from engaging in road-work, have hitherto been insufficient to prevent the jobbing of that much more active class, whose sole motive is self-interest.

The radical vice of the system still continues—that twenty-three gentlemen, chosen not so much by the sheriff as by the ancient usage of the county, from the same families, are *supposed* to be acquainted, *ex officio*, with all the roads of the county, and to be able to decide in a couple of days at the Assizes, upon the right way of executing the works of an entire county for the succeeding half-year. They have not the confidence of the county, they have not confidence in themselves; and besides, they are totally and necessarily ignorant of all those districts where the roads are inaccessible to gentlemen.* The

* These views are not formed from any local, personal, or political bias of the writer. The following extracts from the evidence given before a Committee of the House of Commons in 1825 contain not only the pith of the evidence there received, but amply corroborate what is stated above.

Major-general Bourke, 28th March 1825.—“ I think it is very hard to require the Grand Jury to decide upon the propriety of the work ; I think it is very hard to require a gentleman living in the eastern part of the county to decide upon the propriety of a work to be executed in the western part.”

John Godley, Esq. 20th May.—“ Do you conceive that the Grand Jury are the best body for the discharge of the civil functions with regard to roads and bridges ? — My opinion as an individual is, that they are not.

“ Do you conceive that the objection to the Grand Jury arises from the short time in which they are impanelled, and the total want of power and of responsibility which exists after they are discharged ? — From both, and from other causes.

consequence is, that they have incurred a degree of public obloquy which is altogether undeserved ; and some of those among them who are most anxious to do their duty to the public, conscientiously believe that they act best for the interest of the community, by voting against every road which can by any honest or dishonest ingenuity be questioned, upon the supposed ground of economy ; so that, practically speaking, if even that was the only objection (which

“ What are the other causes ? — I conceive that they are a body of men who have it in their power to put their hands into other people’s pockets, without at the same time considering how far those pockets may be filled, so as to enable the owners to spare anything out of them.”

R. P. MacDonnell, Esq. 27th May. — “ Have you heard that the charges (in Mayo) are excessive ? — I have indeed ; but I have heard more complaints of the misapplication than even of the charges.

“ It is a general complaint in the county, that the roads are confined to particular districts. * * * *

“ Do you attribute the absence of roads in that part to the want of persons on the Grand Jury who would take the charge of carrying presentments through, for the purpose of making roads in that district ? — There are very few resident gentry at present in that district, and I do not think they are likely to be there for some years ; the country is of that wild description, very unsuited indeed to their comfort.”

The three gentlemen whose evidence is here quoted, are well known in Ireland for their abilities and intimate acquaintance with the country. They live in different parts of the south-west, west and north-west of the kingdom, and are known also to entertain opinions very strongly opposed on most other matters. It must be added, however, that the Grand Jury functions are much less unpopular in the eastern part of the country.

it is not), there is no chance of obtaining a satisfactory state of the roads through the agency of the Grand Jury. And this seems universally admitted; for though the law is itself unpopular, every change in it has become still more so. The difficulty hitherto always has been, to know to what body to delegate the same duties; for it would never answer, as some people recommend, to give it to the uncontrollable, distant, (and therefore ignorant) centre of government. But when once the machinery of the Poor Law becomes familiar, and if it should be found to give general satisfaction to all parties, both rich and poor,—it will naturally occur to everybody, that the Guardians elected by the rate-payers, and assisted by the intelligence of the magistrates acting in concert with them *ex officio*, will resume the power of repairing roads originally possessed by the parishes; and the Grand Juries, composed of select *ex officio* Guardians, will resume their original functions, and will only be called upon to interfere in case the Unions neglect this duty; acting in this respect in the only way in which they can act usefully, as a court of appeal, which will give a power of combined action through the roads of the entire county. And another improvement will doubtless be introduced, that the rate required for the repair of roads, for the support of the constabulary, and the relief of the sick, will be levied, together with the Poor Rates, half on the landlords and half on the tenants, by the actual (not the supposed virtual) representatives, of those who pay the rate. All this

can be done without any shock to existing arrangements, as there is already a previous examination of all applications for roads in Baronial Road Sessions, where an attempt has been made to remedy the existing abuses, and to ballot for ten out of the twenty highest cess-payers to sit with the magistrates during the discussion. This remedy has failed, because it is found that the irresponsible cess-payers are naturally no better than the irresponsible magistrates; and though it has been a decided improvement to make a tribunal of this sort more numerous, it is yet necessary that their title should be derived from the voice of the whole body of the rate-payers, and not from the chance of their being themselves amongst the highest contributors. For it so happens, that the highest cess-payers are *invariably graziers*, who do not require roads, and when they do afford their attendance (which they usually neglect to give), they often vote indiscriminately against every road, so that it is no wonder that this arrangement has failed; but it is very fortunate that it has been already made, because it will obviously facilitate the transfer of the duty to the new Union, who will ultimately receive the addition of a machinery, consisting of a Central Directing Surveyor and Assistant Surveyors to help and advise them.

2ndly,—With respect to the want of money.—The main difficulty which those Irish landlords have always experienced, who wanted to make some solitary experiment in improvement, has arisen from the high rate of interest for money; for unless they

happened to be personally known to the lender, the landlords, as a class, are known to want money for unproductive expenditure only, and not for profitable investment. When a man has not been able to live within his income, it is likely that his bad habits will continue, which will prevent his being able to pay the interest; when he knows that his credit is destroyed, he will spend the remainder of his money in bribing the officers of the law, (if they can venture to take bribes,) to enable him to evade the payment of what he considers a usurious interest; and the lender, finding himself foiled, is obliged to ask all future borrowers for an increased per-cent-age to cover the risk which he incurs, lest some amongst them should follow the same course. This is precisely what has occurred in Ireland, and the honest borrowers have been obliged to pay for the schemes of the dishonest; while the law has been culpably negligent of the interests of the honest, and of its paramount duty. The Commissioners of legal inquiry have exposed a series of abuses in the administration of the sheriff's office, and in the enforcement of the final processes of the courts, the actual existence of which, in a civilized community at the present day, is almost incredible.

The remedy suggested is the simplest possible, namely, to assimilate the Irish to the Scotch law,*

* 15th. Rep. Comrs. Cts. of Justice, 1826, p. 93.

and to make the under-sheriff a permanent, and a practically responsible officer. But, simple as this remedy is, and though it has been recommended many years ago, no administration has thought it worth their while to bestow a few weeks' attention (which is literally all that is required) upon the arrangement of the necessary details ; — the reason of this is, that in a popular government, which exists upon popular opinion, the time of the administration is wholly taken up with those matters which press upon popular opinion ; but popular opinion is totally indifferent upon the subject in Ireland. Ignorant calumniators of the Irish may assert, that this arises from a deficiency in right feeling among the people — but it arises from no such thing ; they are a most moral people, in this respect ; and where, from the multiplicity of *small* money transactions, it is most important that a prompt remedy should be given against the creditor, they have worked out for themselves a system of local courts for the recovery of small debts, which is perfectly efficient ; and happens to be the only peculiarly Irish institution which is deservedly popular among every class in Ireland, and is the envy and admiration of the English. The true reason of their indifference about the abuses of the under-sheriff's office is, that these affect two classes in whom nobody feels any sympathy,—the dissipator, and those who speculate upon the risk of lending to him ; and these classes are allowed by public opinion

to fight it out as they please. But as soon as a majority of the borrowers shall be derived from another class—from those *who want money for improvement*, and a majority of the lenders are persons who *wish to lend at low interest without risk*—the popular feeling will change, and the abuses above alluded to will be swept away at once. When a reform in the under-sheriff's office is effected, an Irish landlord will have no more difficulty in getting money than an English landlord, for the English capitalist will not find it more necessary to inquire into personal character, but will merely inquire whether the administration of the law is equally effective in the two countries. At present there is the same lamentable error which is always noticed in Ireland; the law which is nominally the same, is found to be virtually as different as possible.

But though it may be needful, to glance at what may possibly be the current of useful legislation with regard to these local matters, it is desirable that the Poor Law itself should not be clogged with any such considerations at present; the existing emergency is pressing: the Irish people are at certain periods half-starved, solely because they are unable by any existing machinery to improve their own social existence; and the first and paramount consideration should be, how they can be brought to amend their own condition.

§ VIII. Conclusion.

THE economical condition of society in Ireland is one pregnant with so much difficulty, the mass of poverty is so appalling, and the means by which a great portion of the population subsist at present are so peculiar, that any interference of the Legislature with the existing state of things should be most maturely and attentively considered. The situation of the small farmers is so critical, and the position of the numerous class below them is so precarious, that a single false step, acting upon such a dense mass of human beings, might lead to the most melancholy consequences. Widely different opinions are entertained as to the amount of *destitution*, and perhaps even the *poverty* of the multitude may have been overrated. But, viewing the state of things even under the most favourable aspect, it cannot be denied that we have to deal with evils of unusual magnitude.

It is only with the greatest diffidence, therefore, that any opinion on the ultimate working of the Poor Law proposed for Ireland by her Majesty's Government can be formed or expressed. There are so many apparently trifling causes which may disturb the operation of the sound maxims upon which it is founded, that it is difficult to speak with confidence of what may be the practical result of the measure; and the more fully the merits as well as the history of the English Poor Law are consi-

dered, the more sensibly must be appreciated the fatal effects which may be brought on, if the administering authorities should think themselves obliged by any local circumstances to deviate in Ireland from any of the valuable principles contained in the English Law.

In order to endeavour to conciliate those theorists who conscientiously oppose all Poor Laws upon principle, it may be as well to remark, that there exists no difference abstractedly between us in the theory, but only in its practical adaptation, and to state, in conclusion, the grounds on which the improved system of Poor Laws may be earnestly recommended, without abandoning sound principle.

They say that gratuitous relief to able-bodied persons, unknown, is so objectionable that they cannot sanction it even in the mitigated shape that it assumes in the workhouse; that as the law can have no acquaintance with individuals, it should relieve no able-bodied person, as he ought to be able to relieve himself. The supporters of the Poor Law ought to admit the abstract justice of this doctrine, in the broadest, the strongest, and the most unequivocal manner. But the Legislature, instead of striving to make an impracticable short cut to the end proposed by the dogmas of abstract political economy, ought only to aim at reaching that end by the easiest road which circumstances have left open. It should accurately estimate the irresistible force of many faulty habits which have been created and justified

by previous circumstances ; and instead of striving to attain absolute perfection at once, it should rejoice if the happiness of the community can be increased practically by an immediate step in a right direction. The opposers of Poor Laws cannot deny that the workhouse is better than mendicancy, so they take refuge in two or three facts, which, being matters of fact, must depend not so much on reasoning as on the evidence of practical men.

Some opposers assert, 1st, That the able-bodied do not beg at present in Ireland : to which the supporters of Poor Laws reply, that they *do* beg in great numbers, not only themselves, but still more extensively through their families, which is the same thing, or worse.

2ndly, That there can be some better method devised of preventing mendicancy ; but they have always failed in showing what better practical method that is.

3dly, That the workhouse cannot be so arranged as to take in all the beggars, without taking in a much larger class ; and practical men assert that it *can* be so contrived ; or rather, that it will frighten more beggars into habits of industry than it will tempt industrious people to an unproductive existence.

4thly, That if *that* is all it does, it will effect no good. The supporters of the improved Poor Law deny the correctness of that assumption, and assert, that if it did no more, it would still do essen-

tial good : but, in truth, the promoters of the law take much higher ground. They say, that the object of the law should be,—not to organize gratuitous relief, but to organize the co-operation through which gratuitous relief will be no longer required : that people should unite, not so much to relieve destitution, as to prevent the creation of destitution : that in a primitive state of society no law is required for that purpose ; that in a very advanced state of society, as in England, individuals will voluntarily co-operate together for their common good by the formation of Benefit Societies, Savings Banks, Loan Funds, &c. ; and that the law ought to promote these voluntary associations, striving to provide for the smallest residuum possible of destitution, in the manner least acceptable to the destitute, in order to drive them as much as possible to voluntary co-operation. But that in the peculiar position of Ireland, where, from unfortunate circumstances, every cause and every species of misery is most extensively developed—where there is less wholesome organization, less good understanding among classes, and less mutual co-operation than in any other country,—there exists a pre-eminent necessity that the law should step in, not for the sake of providing gratuitous relief to the destitute, (for that exists already to a very remarkable and pernicious extent, and is no new principle,) but to afford a sound, wholesome, and above all, an *efficient* organization, which will induce people to co-

operate to prevent the creation of destitution. That as gratuitous relief is already the universal custom of the Irish people, we cannot stop it at once; but we may check it as much as possible, by rendering it less indiscriminate, by administering it in work-houses, *and by inducing the charitable to confine their voluntary assistance to such persons only as they personally know to be DESERVING*, in order to keep them out of the workhouse. That as the introduction of any sound principle of mutual co-operation is a totally new ingredient in the social state of Ireland, we may look forward to a proportionately striking and satisfactory result; but that if the most sanguine anticipations are realized, the object will have been attained,—not by the institution of gratuitous relief to the destitute, but by amending the shape in which it is at present afforded, and by the organization of a system, by which people will co-operate to avoid the present necessity of gratuitous relief.

If that be indeed, (as is asserted,) the intention of the supporters of the proposed law, and if there is any truth in the foregoing remarks, it is desirable to repeat again the minor objections which have been already urged in these pages. And in order to attract attention to them, if possible, and to excite discussion among experienced persons, they must be stated in a more *positive* manner than the writer would otherwise venture to assume.

Finally then, it will be found by practical experi-

ence of the local circumstances of Ireland,—1st, That the formation of Unions of several hundred square miles will not obtain the necessary aid of rapid and effective co-operation. 2nd, That exempting the small farmer from the rate, under the erroneous impression that he is almost a pauper himself, will check the co-operation of one of the most useful and least appreciated classes of society in Ireland. 3rd, That the Poor Law, to be successful, must be worked by the employers of labour, and that to obtain their assistance it will be necessary in many very poor districts to pay them for the expenses of their attendance.

THE END.

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